

HOME TALKS
ABOUT THE WORD



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THE INFANT JESUS.
Raphael's "Sistine Madonna."

HOME TALKS ABOUT THE WORD

FOR

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

BY

EMILY HUNTINGTON MILLER



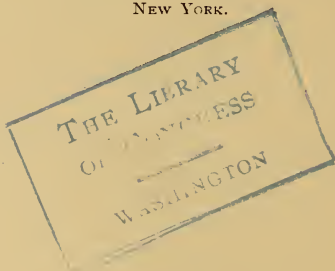
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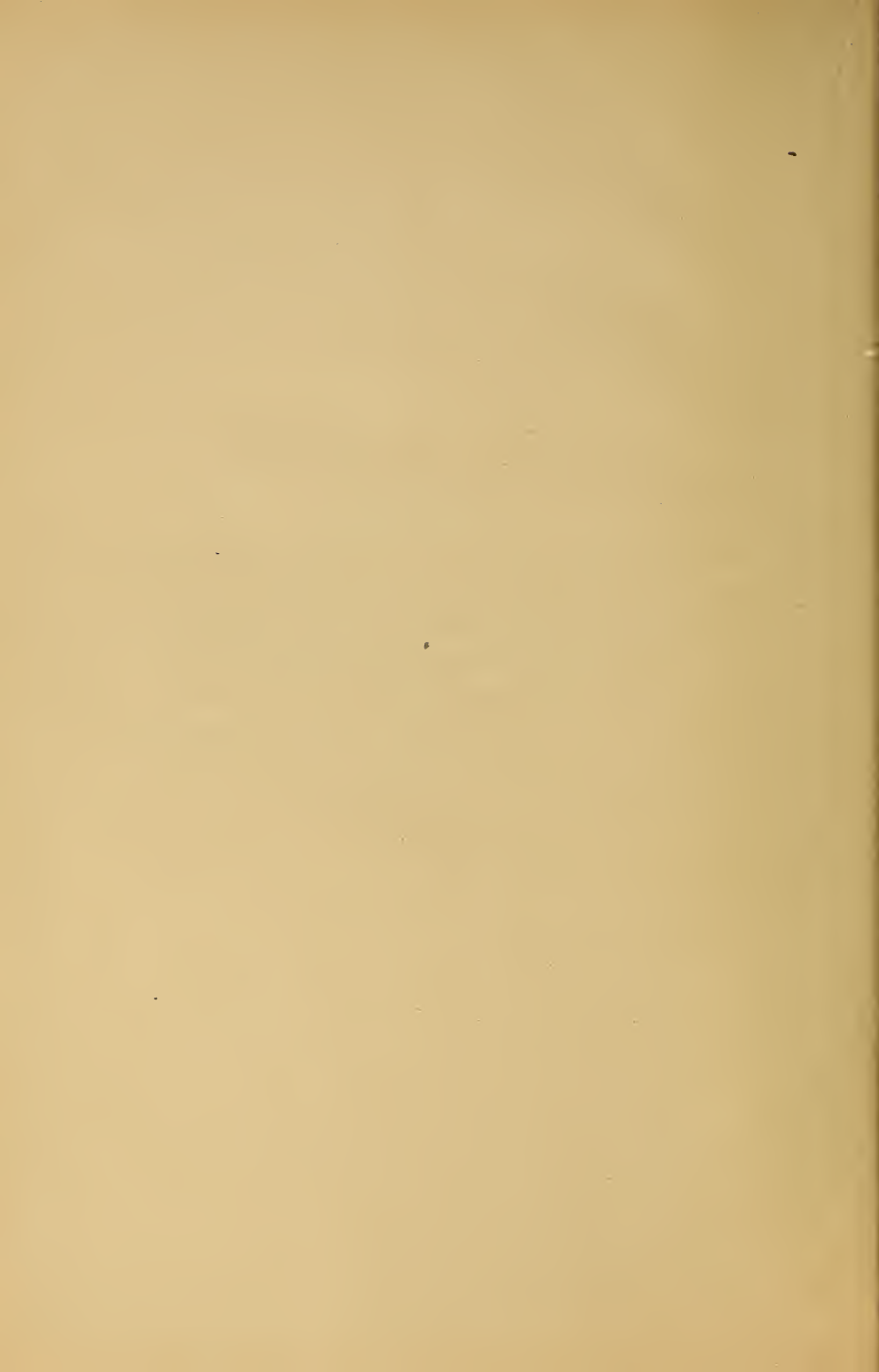
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To All Mothers

Who hold to their royal office as instructors of their children
these Home Talks are Dedicated,
with the hope that they may be helpful in making clear
and practical the vital truths of Christianity as
embodied in the life and teachings of
our Lord.

EMILY HUNTINGTON MILLER.

Evanston, Ill., June, 1894.



PREFACE.

THESE papers, now presented in book form, were published through a period of years in the *Christian Union* newspaper. Although based upon the International Sunday School Lessons, they were not intended especially for the use of the class room, but rather for the household. No attempt has been made in their arrangement to carry out exact chronological order, but only a general sequence of leading events, and study of the Scripture itself (as indicated in the table of contents) is always taken for granted.

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HOME TALKS ABOUT THE WORD.

CHAPTER I.

THE SAVIOUR-KING.

OUR precious Bible which God has given us is in two parts. The part which he gave us first we call the Old Testament, and the part which he gave us after our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world we call the New Testament. The beautiful stories of Abraham and Jacob and Joseph and Moses are in the Old Testament. It tells us also how God took care of his people through the long years that they were in the wilderness, and how he brought them at last into the land of Canaan. It tells the story of their kings—David and Solomon and all the rest—and the prophets and the teachers God sent them that they might not forget to watch for the Saviour who was some day coming to save the people of Israel and all the nations of the earth.

In the garden of Eden God had told the first man and woman about this Saviour-King, and all through the years he had repeated the promise. David sang about him in his beautiful songs, and Isaiah and the other prophets had been allowed to look away down the years and see where the King should be born and how he should live. But even these prophets did not understand much about the Saviour-King, and so it was not very strange that the

people forgot all about his saving them from sin, and truly thought that the King who was coming would deliver them from their enemies who had conquered them and make them a great and powerful nation. They thought he would reign in Jerusalem in a splendid palace and fill all the city with his riches, as Solomon had done. Most of the people had even forgotten to watch for him, but some remembered the promise, and were praying and hoping, and sure that the time must be very near.

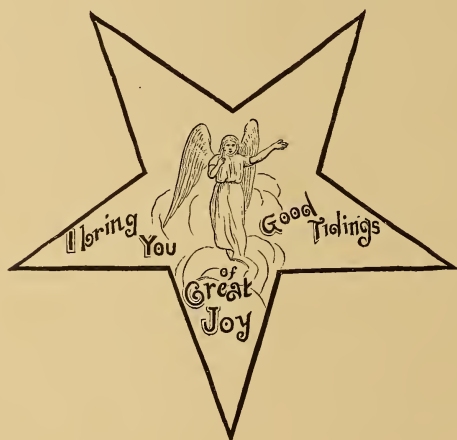
It was to some of these watchers that by and by a message was sent to tell them that the world's Saviour was coming. A message was sent to a good old priest named Zacharias, and his wife Elizabeth, that a little son was to be born to them who should be the herald of the Saviour-King, to tell people he was coming and prepare them to receive him. And another messenger was sent to Mary, the cousin of Elizabeth, to tell her the wonderful news that this King who had been so long waited and watched for was to be her own little son, given her by the great Lord of life, a precious, holy gift. A glorious angel brought the message, and he told her this divine child was to be called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins.

When Isaiah wrote of the coming of the Saviour-King he said those that were watching for his coming should sing together, and that even the hills and the waste places should break forth into joy. And so Mary, when she went to tell her cousin Elizabeth of the good tidings the angel had brought her, sang a song of gladness. She only thought of her own joy and of praising God for bestowing upon her this great honor, that she should be the mother of the Saviour for whom her people had been looking for hundreds of years. But Mary's song

has been preserved for us, because it is a part of the story of Jesus, and since that day thousands of people in lands that had never been dreamed of in Mary's day have sung its sweet words of praise. Is it not a beautiful thought that this young Jewish girl, in a humble Jewish home, just singing the gladness of her own heart, should have started a psalm of thanksgiving that has gone on ever since, drawing new voices to join in its music?

Mary was only a sweet, true-hearted woman, no wiser than other women, and she may very likely have thought the humble home, where she expected to live with Joseph the carpenter, who was to be her husband, was a very poor place for the home of a king. But her boy was to be born in a much more lowly place than this. Just before he was born the great Roman emperor, whose servants all the Jewish people were, sent out a command that they should all be taxed, so that he might have more money in his treasury. And to save his officers trouble the people had to come, each man to his native city, to have his name written on the books and pay his tax to the collector. So from all over the land, sometimes a very long distance, whole families came traveling to the towns and cities where they were to be taxed. Joseph and Mary came from Nazareth, away in the north of Palestine, to the little town of Bethlehem, near Jerusalem, the very Bethlehem where David lived when he was a shepherd boy. A great many other people came also, and the town was so full that there was not room for all the visitors at the inn or among their friends. Some of them were lodged in the stable, but we need not think of this as any hardship, for people in that country were often so lodged. Probably Joseph and Mary were very glad to get so comfortable a place after their long jour-

ney ; but here in this lonely stable the Saviour-King was born, as if to show that his coming was to be a blessing not only to the poor, but even to the dumb beasts for whom he taught us our Father cares. There were no royal robes for the little King to wear ; he was dressed just as all young babies were in that day, by wrapping him from head to foot in long strips of linen, called swaddling bands, and he was laid in the stone manger where the cattle were fed. In the inn perhaps a few people knew that a little baby was born out in the stable, but none of them thought that a greater king than Solomon had come to set up his kingdom among them. It was only in heaven that the wonderful event was really understood, and the first song of welcome and rejoicing was sung by the heavenly host.



CHAPTER II.

A SONG IN THE NIGHT.

ONLY a few persons had been told the wonderful news that the time had come for the birth of the Saviour. They were none of them great people ; and when at last he was born, in Bethlehem of Judea, the angel who brought the good tidings was not sent to the king or to the high priest, but to some shepherds who were watching their flocks by night in the fields near the little town.

We do not know the names of these shepherds, or anything about them ; but God's messages come to those who are waiting to hear and ready to receive them ; so we can be quite sure that they were men who thought about the promised Saviour and were watching for his coming. In these very fields David used to tend his sheep ; it was here that the lion and the bear came and took the lamb from his flock ; and here, in the starlit nights, he may have sung his song beginning, "The heavens declare the glory of God." What would these shepherds do as they lay there, wrapped in their garments of camel's hair ? Perhaps they would sing some of those very songs of David that were still chanted in the temple, or talk about a wonderful story that some one had brought from the hill country of a child who had been born to an old priest, who was said to be the messenger sent to prepare the way of the Lord.

Suddenly, while they were singing or talking, or silently watching, a great light shone round about them ;

not a light like the sun or the moon, but more splendid than either, for this was the glory of the Lord, and in it they saw an angel standing by them, and they were "sore afraid." The angel may have been there before; God's angels may often be about us, as we know that God himself is; but our eyes cannot see them, and so we forget them. We speak words and do deeds that would make us tremble with shame and fear if we could see the holy faces looking upon us. And sometimes, when we kneel and say "Our Father," as if we really believed God was in the room and listening to our words, we are thinking of other things—of our work or our play or our plans. What if, all at once, as if a curtain were drawn away, the glory of God should shine out and we should hear him say, "I am here; I am listening?" Even if we were quite honest and sincere we should probably be as the shepherds were, sore afraid.

The first words of the angel were, "Fear not." The message is one of love; it is good tidings of great joy, the very best news that ever was told to man; the news that the Saviour was here, born that day, in the city of David: good news for all people; for this Saviour is not a king of the Jews, but Christ the Lord, who comes with the tidings that it is all the world which God so loved as to send them salvation.

The angel told them where they should find the babe and how he would be dressed, and then, as if they could keep silence no longer, a multitude of the heavenly host were with the messenger, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men." David had never sung any such song as that; no such song had ever been sung on earth before: good will from God to everybody; not anger,

SHEPHERDS FEEDING THEIR FLOCKS NEAR BETHLEHEM.



but love ; not punishment, but help ; not wrath, but mercy ; not war, but peace—good tidings of great joy to all people.

When the angels went away the shepherds did not wait, but went with haste to Bethlehem. They did not say, “ Let us go and see if it is so,” but, “ Let us go and see this thing which has come to pass ;” they hastened because they believed. Just as they expected, they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger, and when they had seen him they went about telling to everyone the wonderful things the angel had told them about the child. They told Mary also, and, while other people only wondered, Mary treasured up the words in her heart, and thought about them, and did not forget them when the shepherds had gone back again to their flocks.

The shepherds did go back again to the fields, though they praised God as they went and thanked him for what they had seen and heard. Why should we not be as glad as they were at the good tidings of great joy ? The news is just as true and just as sure to-day as if each one of us had received it from the angel host, and we are to do exactly what the shepherds did :

Listen to the message.

Believe it.

Go just as we are bidden to find the Saviour for ourselves.

Tell the good news to others.

Go about our daily work praising and glorifying God.

If we do this we are taking up the song the angels sang, and spreading over the world the blessed tidings of God’s love and good will to all people.

CHAPTER III.

THE BABE IN JERUSALEM.

THE crowds that filled the town of Bethlehem have gone back to their homes, and it is once more a quiet little village, with room enough in the inn for travelers. But in some one of its humble homes one family that came from a long distance still stays. Joseph is there, with Mary his wife, and the babe Jesus; for when this child is forty days old he must be taken to the temple at Jerusalem and given to the Lord. Every first-born son belonged to God; but, instead of becoming a priest and serving in the temple, the parents could give a sum of money to redeem the child, and so receive him back again. Perhaps, too, Joseph and Mary did not mean to go back to Nazareth. They would not forget what promises had been made about this child, or what a wonderful story the shepherds had told of angels who called him "Christ the Lord." Would they not be quite likely to think that right here in the city of David, near by Jerusalem, was the best place for the royal child to be brought up?

But now the babe is forty days old, and Joseph and Mary go up with him to Jerusalem, to offer their sacrifice and to present him to the Lord. Let us go with them, for they will probably walk along the narrow, hilly road, Joseph with his staff, and Mary carrying the baby wrapped in the veil that is thrown over her head and shoulders.

In the city of Jerusalem they must buy their offering; if they were rich it would be a lamb and a dove, but as they are poor it will be a pair of doves—turtledoves, with their purplish-gray feathers and great soft eyes, such as the dealers sell in the courts of the temple for a few cents. The offering is bought, and now Joseph and Mary go reverently toward the priest who is waiting to receive it. The mother never forgets what things have been foretold of this child; she ponders them in her heart, and is always expecting to hear more. She wonders now if the priest will think this is no more than a common baby. Others are in the temple. It is the hour when they may come to pray in this holy place, and there at this very moment comes old Simeon. Everybody knows the devout old man, whose life has been full of goodness, and whose heart is so true and pure that God's Spirit fills it like light. He is growing feeble, and people who see him going up to the temple say he will not live much longer. But there is one thing Simeon is waiting for; he wants to see the Saviour of the world before he dies, and for years he has just been waiting for that, because God has promised him that he shall see him, and so he is always watching. He sees this little child that the mother is bringing to the priest, and the Spirit tells him, "This is he."

How glad old Simeon is! He does not ask any questions, but just takes the child in his arms and blesses God, and says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

The priest and the people who stand by look won-

deringly on, and do not understand what old Simeon means. They only expect a king who shall save them; they never think of God's sending salvation to all peoples, or that their glory must be in carrying the light to nations that sit in darkness.

But here comes another saint to whom God has spoken, Anna, the prophetess, a very old woman, whose whole life is spent in prayer and in talking with friends who, like her, are watching for the time when God shall save his people. She, too, knows that this is the promised one, and she thanks God also, and hastens to tell the news to those who have watched with her.

Deeper grows the wonder in Mary's heart and in Joseph's. Simeon tells them plainly of the work this child is sent to do, but for the first time they hear of something besides joy and triumph. This King is going to be spoken against; the Jews are not going to receive him; they are going to show out the evil of their thoughts and wishes and desires, and only by being humbled are they to be lifted up. The old man has a message, too, for Mary; she has been glad and proud that she has been made the mother of this blessed babe, but Simeon tells her that sorrow like a sword will pierce through her heart, and now she has one more thing to hide away and ponder.



CHAPTER IV.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN.

AWAY off in Persia, and Arabia, and in countries a long distance from Canaan there were people who knew that some day a wonderful child was to be born in Judea, in whom all the nations of the world were to be blessed. God has many ways of teaching people, and he speaks by his Spirit to those who really seek to understand and do his will. In some way these wise men as they read and studied and thought about what had been promised were so taught. They said to each other, "This is the time for that Saviour-King to be born; we must be watching for him."

Then one night they saw in the heavens a great beautiful star, and they said, "This is his star; we will go to Judea and find him."

So they took rich gifts, as men did who went to the court of a king, and made the long journey across the desert until they came to the city of Jerusalem. They thought, of course, they should find the King there, but when they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" no one knew anything about him. The Jews had a bad, cruel king named Herod, who had been set over them by their Roman conquerors. They feared and hated him, and they were all hoping for a king who should be strong enough to deliver them from him. They were all excited over the coming of the wise men, and they went about asking, "Is it really true that the



"LO, THE STAR WHICH THEY SAW IN THE EAST."

King is born? Where is he? Who is he?" But they never dreamed that this little baby down in the manger at Bethlehem was the promised King.

Herod heard about the strangers, and he was greatly troubled. He, too, knew that a king had been promised and so he sent for the men who knew most about what the prophets had written, and asked them where the King was to be born. They told him that, more than seven hundred years before, the prophet Micah had said that the King should be born in the little town of Bethlehem. When Herod heard this he said in his heart, "I will send to Bethlehem and kill him; he shall never be king."

But how could he be sure of finding him? First he called these strangers and asked them at what time this strange star appeared, and after they told him he said, "My wise men say that this child will be born in Bethlehem. Go to Bethlehem and find him, and then bring me word again, so that I may come and worship him too."

Herod hoped to find the very child who had been born King of the Jews; but if he could not find him he still felt sure of killing him, because he meant to kill all the little babies in the town.

The wise men started toward Bethlehem. Probably it was evening, and they wondered how they should know the house where the young child was; but there in the sky they saw again the same star which they had seen away in the far east, and it moved on before them like a guide until it shone over the very spot where Jesus was. The wise men were very glad to see it; they knew God was leading them and that they could not go wrong. When they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother, they knew

instantly that this was the King. They fell down and worshiped him, and brought out their precious gifts, and gave to him gold and sweet spices, such offerings as men give to kings and lay upon God's altar; for this was a heavenly king.

Herod was waiting for them at Jerusalem, but they did not come. God warned them in a dream not to go back to that bad man, so they went home to their own far country by another way. When they came they were asking, "Where is the King?" But now they must have been rejoicing and saying, "We have found the King." But though they were very wise men they did not begin to understand what a precious gift God had sent into the world, or what a blessed King this was who should *save his people from their sins*.



CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

ANOTHER *warning*. When the wise men fell down and worshiped the infant Jesus and called him a king and spread their rich gifts before him it seemed as if almost any day he might be sent for to come up to Jerusalem and be proclaimed king. But as soon as the wise men had received their warning from God and gone away to their own country a message came to Joseph also. In a dream an angel appeared to him and said, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

Egypt was more than three hundred miles away, and all the way the little Jesus must be carried in his mother's arms as she rode upon an ass. It was a very long, hard journey. Could not God take care of this King? Was he not stronger than Herod?

Joseph did not wait to ask any questions. God had told him what to do, and as soon as he arose he took the young child and his mother and departed into Egypt while it was yet night. They made the long journey safely, and somewhere in the land of Egypt they found a home where they lived, perhaps among friends, waiting for God to tell them what to do next.

While Joseph and Mary and Jesus were traveling day after day along the road to Egypt, Herod was growing

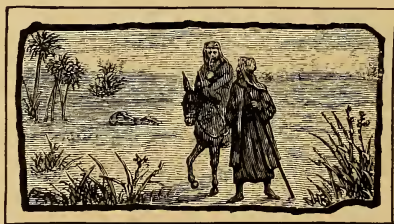
impatient because the wise men did not come back to tell him where the King was born. He waited until he was sure they had gone home, and then he was in a great rage. He was angry because they had not done as he had bade them, and he was furious to think that perhaps, after all, this new King might escape him and take his kingdom. He called his soldiers and told them to kill every little boy that was under two years old in the town and all around in that part of the country. Poor, foolish, cruel Herod! He had done so many wicked things that his heart was too hard to be sorry for the little innocent babies or their broken-hearted fathers and mothers. He did not care at all that the land was filled with weeping, and he went on doing dreadful deeds, until one day God touched him and he died. There was not one to mourn for him; even his own children were glad, for he had killed three of them and might have killed the others if he had lived any longer. His son, Archelaus, was made king.

When Herod was dead the angel came again to Joseph and bade him go back again to the land of Israel, and Joseph obeyed. God did not tell him just where he was to live, and he started for Bethlehem in Judea. But as he got nearer and began to meet friends and acquaintances and talk with them about the new King he was troubled by what he heard. They said, "Archelaus is king; he is even worse than his father—more bloody and selfish and cruel." So Joseph was afraid to go into Judea.

God chose for Joseph. He whispered to him, "Go back into Galilee, to your old home at Nazareth there. Nazareth is the very town where so many years ago Isaiah said the Saviour-King should live."

They went to Nazareth, and there for twelve years Jesus, our Lord, lived in the humble home of Joseph and Mary, obeying them in all things, and growing so pure and beautiful and gracious day by day that he won the love of all who saw him. None of the people about him ever thought that he was a king, or that he was any different from the other children of the town. He was always good, but they did not wonder very much about that. The Bible says he grew and was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him, and he grew in favor with God and man; but for many years he served God by obedience to his parents, like any common child.

The wise men in their far country heard nothing more about the King that had been born. The shepherds that heard the angels sing did not know what had become of the little baby they saw in the manger. The old saints, Simeon and Anna, who were so glad when the child Jesus was brought into the temple, had died and gone to heaven without seeing him again. But all the time Jesus was about his Father's business just as much as when he began to teach and to cast out evil spirits.



CHAPTER VI.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

IF anyone could tell us the true story of the childhood of Jesus we should be interested in every day and hour of his life and everything he said or did. But all that we know of his first twelve years is summed up in one short verse, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." There could be no more beautiful story of a child's life than that, to grow healthfully in body and mind; to be filled with the wisdom and to be ruled and guided by the grace of God, that would make a perfect life that would move on so smoothly that perhaps others would never notice it to think how wonderful it was.

Mary may have thought about it, because she kept in her heart the memory of the strange things that had been told her about her boy, and, as she taught him the commandments and the words of the law and the things that every Jewish lad must learn before he was twelve years old, she must have often been astonished at this wisdom with which he was filled. But we can only guess how that might have been, for the next thing we are told is of his first visit to the temple, made when Jesus was twelve years old. It was the feast of the passover, and from all over the land little companies of friends and neighbors journeyed together to Jerusalem, resting under the palm trees by the way or camping at night where there was a well from which they could draw.

As they came nearer to Jerusalem other little companies would join them, and before they entered the city there would be a long procession, singing songs of praise and thanksgiving for the deliverance from death which came to their people so many years before in the land of Egypt, when they were the slaves of Pharaoh.

It was a great event for every Jewish boy when, at the age of twelve years, he was taken to the temple and himself took part in the solemn ceremonies. From that time he was considered not a child, but a man, and must begin to learn some trade or business by which he could make a living. Probably there were other lads with Jesus, his companions and relatives, and they may all have gone to the temple together and been questioned by the wise old priests to see how well they had been taught and what they understood about the law.

But when the feast was over the companies started to go home. The men were accustomed to walk by themselves and the women by themselves; so when Mary did not see her son she said, "He is with his father or with some of the other lads," and Joseph thought, "He is with his mother or his cousins," and without any anxiety they went on until nearly evening.

Then they began to look for him. They went around among their relatives and their acquaintances, but nobody had seen the boy, and so in great alarm they turned back to the city. There they sought him for three days, and at last, when they had begun to fear lest they never should see him again, they went into the temple where the wise teachers were explaining the law and answering the questions of those who listened. There, in the midst of them, was Jesus, listening to their words, asking them questions and answering with such



A WAYSIDE ENCAMPMENT.

"And when he was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem."

wonderful wisdom the questions they asked him that everybody was astonished at him. But Mary did not stop to think about his wisdom. She only knew that here was her dear boy alive and well, and looking as if he had forgotten all about her and how frightened and broken-hearted she had been all these days.

She said, "How could you treat us so? Do you know how your father and I have sought you, sorrowing?"



JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

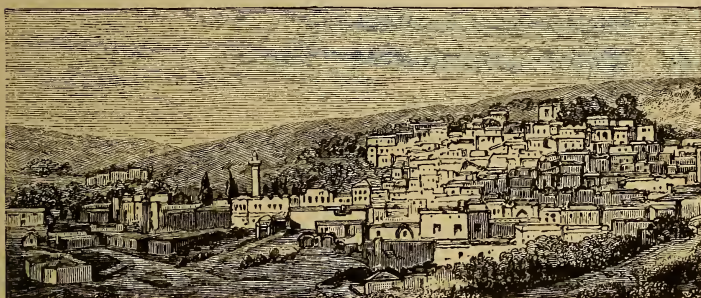
After the painting by W. Holman Hunt.

Jesus seems often to have been disappointed that Mary did not understand him better, after all that had been told her about him, and now there is a kind of wonder in his words: "Why should you seek me? Do you not understand that now I am twelve years old it is time for me to be about my Father's business, the business of my life?"

But it was not the chief priests and the doctors of the

law who were to teach Jesus about his Father's business. He was not to be taught in Jerusalem city at all, but in the humble little town of Nazareth, and so, obeying the Spirit who led him always, he went back home. There for eighteen years longer he worked with Joseph at the carpenter's trade, an obedient son.

His body grew to manhood, his mind developed, and his character was so perfect and so beautiful that he won the love and admiration of those who knew him. Best of all, he had the favor of God. He was his "beloved



NAZARETH.

Son, in whom he was well pleased," just as surely when he was working in the carpenter's shop as when he was healing the sick and raising the dead. How Mary must have wondered as day by day she saw her son going on just as other men did, with nothing to show that the glorious things of which the angel had spoken were ever to come to pass! Could she have dreamed about the story of Zacharias and the shepherds and the rest? No, she knew it was all real, but what did it mean? She did not talk about these things but she kept them all in her heart, and treasured up all the sayings of her son Jesus.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE PREACHER.

IF you had lived a long way from Jerusalem, and had gone on a visit to the city at the time of which we read in the third chapter of Luke, you would have seen many people passing through the streets and going out at one of the city gates. You would have noticed that they all seemed to take one road and go across the plain toward the river Jordan. And then you might have seen just such companies coming from all the little villages and taking the road that led toward the barren deserts beyond the river, and you might have wondered what they were going out there for. It could not be to work, for this was the year of jubilee, when people did not sow their fields, but left the land to rest. Perhaps you would have asked some man with a long white beard, "Sir, will you tell me where these people are going, and why they go?" And the man would have told you that these people, scribes and Pharisees, lawyers and soldiers, poor men and women and rich ones, good men and women and bad ones—all were going out to hear a strange man preach. His name was John; he was called John the Baptist, because he baptized people. He was like the old prophet Elijah, who died so many years before. Instead of robes of fine linen he wore a garment of coarse cloth made of camel's hair, fastened by a girdle of leather. Instead of living in a house he lived in caves and among the rocks, and ate the locusts and wild honey that travelers in the desert



JOHN THE BAPTIST.

“ The voice of one crying in the wilderness.”

often used for food. Instead of going to a church or synagogue, where the people were waiting for him, he stood out in the open air, where there were no houses, and from all about the country the people came to hear him. We have heard of this preacher before, when he was only a baby boy. He was the son of the good old priest Zacharias, one of the persons to whom the news of the coming of the Saviour-King was told. His father had said he was to be a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord, and now that he had grown to manhood he began his work, and everybody was astonished at his message.

When the people went to the temple or the synagogue to worship they heard the priests read how the Lord loved his people, how he had chosen Abraham and promised to bless all his children, and they went away feeling very proud that they were the children of Abraham. But this strange preacher said: "Do not think you are safe because Abraham is your father; you must repent of your sins and do right, for the Lord is coming to set up his kingdom. He is close by, you must repent now. *Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The people all knew how earthly kings sent messengers before them to tell their people to prepare the roads and take everything out of the way that the king might find his kingdom ready. So John said he was just the messenger of the great King sent to cry aloud in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

They were to prepare the way by ceasing to do whatever was wrong. The king would not come into a dark, dirty house over a road that was rough and crooked and full of deep pits. And the Lord would not come into a heart that was full of sin and wrongdoing and hateful

thoughts and feelings. So when the people said, "How shall we prepare the way?" John said, "Repent! cease to do evil, learn to do well, help the poor, be honest in all things, be kind, be true, be contented."

Then when anyone said, "Yes, I know I have done evil, but I will do so no more," he baptized him in the river Jordan to show that now the Lord washed away his past sins. And he told them that presently, when the King himself came, he would fill them with his Holy Spirit that would be like a light within them. The poor people and the bad people and the soldiers and the tax-gatherers all confessed their sins and asked what they should do. But by and by some of the proud Sadducees and Pharisees came to look on and to listen. They did not ask, "What shall we do to prepare the way for the Lord?" They did not think they needed to do anything; but John called them *vipers*, and told them they were in as great danger as anyone, and if they really wished to escape punishment they must show by their lives that they turned away from sin. He told them that the Lord was like a gardener who had waited long to see if his trees would bear good fruit, but now he had his ax ready to cut down those that did not, and burn them up; that he was like a farmer who was ready to sift the chaff out of his wheat and burn it up, and he bade them repent before it was too late.

God sends to everyone of us to-day this message that he sent by John the Baptist:

"*Prepare the way*, that the Lord may come and reign in your heart."

"*Prepare the way* by turning away from wrongdoing and learning to do well."

"*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*. God is always

ready to come in whenever any heart is ready for him."

"He cuts down the tree that does not bear good fruit; he burns up the chaff that has no grain in it, but he saves the good and gathers them up safely."



CHAPTER VIII.

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION.

WHILE John the Baptist was preaching by the river Jordan and bidding the people repent of their sins, that they might be ready for the King who was coming, Jesus himself was living quietly at Nazareth, and John did not even know that he was the one whose coming he was every day looking for. But at last the time came for Jesus also to begin to preach, and one day, when John in his rough garment was baptizing the people, Jesus came to him to be baptized. Instantly something in John's heart whispered, "This is he; the Lamb of God," and he bowed his head reverently and said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But John was a true servant, and when Jesus bade him baptize him he obeyed, and He who was to take away the sin of the world was consecrated, or set apart, to his holy work as the priests in the temple were.

As Jesus went up out of the water he was praying, talking to his Father of the great work which he was to do; and now a beautiful thing came to pass. Long before, when John was bidden to go and prepare the way for the Saviour-King, God had promised to give him a sign by which he should know him. As John looked at Jesus he saw the heavens open and a shape like a dove descend and rest upon him. This was the sign that God had promised, but there was even more than this, for a voice spoke out of heaven and said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I*

am well pleased." Probably only John and Jesus heard the voice, but that was enough. John was made sure now that Jesus was the Lamb of God, and Jesus himself was filled with the Spirit, so that the story says he was driven away into the wilderness by it as a strong wind drives everything before it. There in a lonely, desolate place, with the wild beasts for companions, he stayed for forty days. We do not know how these days passed, but we may guess that he was praying and talking with his Father,



THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

and so full of joy at the work that was before him and the voice that had said, "This is my beloved Son," that he did not think of eating and drinking. But by and by his human body grew faint and hungry, and then the devil came to tempt him. Jesus was ready to begin the work of saving us, and the first thing he did was to share our temptations.

When we are tempted there is usually something outside of us that persuades us to do a thing, and something

within us that wants to do it. If you were very hungry, and some one said, "Come and take this bread," your hunger would make you wish to take it, and there would be nothing wrong in that. But if you knew it was stolen bread, or if your father had forbidden you to eat it, your hungry stomach would still want it, so you would be tempted; but if you did not take it there would be nothing wrong in being tempted. It would only prove that you were brave and obedient. All our lives long we are tempted. Satan says to us, "Come and do this," and something in our hearts wants to do it, but we need not yield to temptation. How do we know we need not? Because our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted too, and he did not yield, and he says he will help everyone of us if we will only call on him for help.

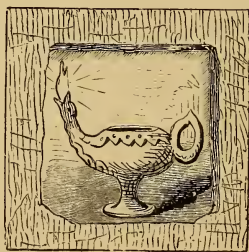
He was tempted so that we might be sure he knew all about it and understood our troubles, and knew just how hard it sometimes was to be good. Sometimes when you are sick, or hurt, or in trouble, and your mother wants to help you to be brave and comfort you, she says, "Yes, I know just how bad it is; I have felt just so myself, but try to be patient and bear it." Or if you have some very bitter medicine to take she tastes it, and says, "Yes, it tastes very badly, but it will do you good."

So the Bible says of our Lord Jesus that we are to remember that he was tempted in all points just as we are, and because he has suffered he is able to help us. You and I cannot understand all about this story, but we can understand that just the kind of trials that come to us came to Jesus. What the devil bids us do is very sure to be wrong, no matter what excellent reasons he brings, and Jesus showed us by his example that no matter in what sore need we are we should wait patiently

for God's help, and not try to deliver ourselves by obeying Satan. We can learn also that we are not to go into danger to see if God will deliver us. We are to go when he bids us and where he sends us, and then he will give his angels charge to keep us safely.

And we are never to believe that we can accomplish any good by working in Satan's ways. He does not say, "Fall down and worship me and I will give you a kingdom," but he tries to show us how much quicker and easier we can succeed if we will only try his ways of working. How much more good we can do if we will only give up in little things, and how impossible it will be for us to win in any other way! He persuades a man not to be too stiff in his principles, the workman to slight his work a little, the manufacturer not to be too particular about the quality of his stuff, the boy to take a little advantage in his games, the student to cheat a little in his lessons, and it is all bowing down to Satan in the hope of winning something that is not his to give. For the kingdoms of this world *do not* belong to Satan, but to the Lord, and our way of escape is the way Jesus took—to say boldly, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

When Jesus said that Satan left him, and the angels came and ministered unto him.



CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

SHOULD you like to know how John, who was Jesus's dearest friend, first became acquainted with him? He himself tells us. He had heard the preaching of that other John, who was the messenger of the Saviour-King, and who told them of the One who was coming to take away their sins. Most of the people listened and went away, but there were some who stayed with their teacher and became his scholars, or disciples, that they might learn more about this One who was coming. One of these disciples was named Andrew, and another was John, this very John who is telling us how he got acquainted with Jesus. They were standing one day with their teacher in the fields talking together about a wonderful thing that they had heard the day before. Their master had told them how, when Jesus came to him, he saw something like a beautiful white dove descending from heaven upon him and heard a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son." As they were talking they looked up, and there was Jesus himself walking slowly along. His face must have been worn and sad, for he had been forty days away in the wilderness while Satan tried and tempted him, but now he was ready to begin his blessed work of saving his people from their sins. Andrew and John looked at him as he passed, and their teacher said: "This is he; this is the one of whom I told you. He is the Son of God. He is the one who will take

away our sins. Look at him. Behold the Lamb of God !”

This Lamb of God who could take away sin was the very one John and Andrew wanted to find ; so when they heard their teacher say this they started to follow Jesus. They did not speak to him, but presently Jesus turned and saw them following and spoke to them. He said, “What seek ye?” and they said, “Master, where do you live?” Jesus said to them, “Come and see ;” and they went on with him to the place where he lived.

Perhaps it was only a tent or a cave among the rocks, for Jesus himself said he often had no place to lay his head. But wherever it was they stayed with Jesus all the rest of the day, and as they talked with him they knew that this was really the Saviour for whom they had been hoping.

They were so glad they wanted to go and tell the good news to some one else, and they thought first of those whom they loved. Andrew thought of his own brother Simon, and he went to him and said, “We have found Christ ; come quickly and I will take you to him.” So he brought his brother to Jesus. Perhaps Peter expected to find the Christ in the temple or in a palace, but when Jesus looked at him and spoke to him he did not doubt that this really was the Christ. Jesus did not wait for Andrew to introduce his brother. He just looked at Simon and called him by his name and told him he should have another name by and by.

The next day Jesus called another man, named Philip, to be his disciple, and Philip, when he had talked with Jesus, went, full of rejoicing, to call his friend Nathanael.

Nathanael had been waiting and praying alone in his garden, for he too had heard about the Lamb of God

that was coming to take away the sins of the world. But when Philip came and said, "We have found him; he is here; his name is Jesus of Nazareth," Nathanael could hardly believe it could be true.

But when Jesus showed that he knew all about him, when he told him that he saw him praying under the fig tree before Philip called him, Nathanael said, "Master, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

So day after day the number of the disciples grew, because when Jesus said to anyone, "Come, follow me," he left everything and came, and each one said to others, "Come and see Jesus."

That is the way we can add to the number of Christ's disciples now. He says to everyone of us, "Come, follow me; be my child;" and we can obey ourselves and invite others to come. It is not only our words that may say, Come; if our lives are gentle and pure, and we show that our hearts are full of love and peace, we shall all the time be saying, Come; for we shall be walking with Jesus.



CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST MIRACLE.

MOTHER. This is a pleasant little story to me because it happened so early in the public life of Jesus. It was just after he had called his first disciples, and before he had really begun to preach. Wicked men had not begun to hate him, but he walked about with his friends like any common man, so far as they could see, though all the time he was really waiting and listening till his Father's voice should say, "Now the time has come." Where was this first miracle done, Henry?

Henry. At Cana, in Galilee; Jesus and his mother and his disciples were invited to the wedding.

Mary. Jesus used to live in Galilee, so perhaps this might have been some one whom he used to know; but how came they to invite all his disciples?

Mother. Andrew and his brother Simon, John, and perhaps his brother James, Philip, and Nathanael—these were all of Galilee; so they might also have been friends of the bride or bridegroom. But these people were very anxious to have as many guests as possible at a wedding feast, and invited everyone whom they knew. If you and I had been there we should probably have been invited, and we should have seen long tables spread with all kinds of food, while servants passed up and down on one side, carrying wine to the guests, who reclined upon couches on the other side of the tables. Near the door we should have seen six great jars of



AN EASTERN MARRIAGE FEAST.

COLEMAN DUNN.

water, and, as any one came in, a servant, with a towel and basin, would dip some water from the jar and pour it over the hands of the guest, lest he had touched something unclean on his way. A man called the ruler of the feast directed everything.

Henry. I should think the host would have done that.

Mother. No, they thought he showed greater honor to his guests by giving up his house and his table to them, and not taking the chief place. We can imagine how Jesus and his disciples came in, after a long walk, perhaps, and how the servants would remove their sandals and bathe their feet at the outer court, and then water would be poured over their hands, and perhaps sweet odors upon their heads, and they would be given places among the other guests at the table. But all at once some one calls for wine, and the servants say there is no more. In that day everybody drank wine, not the poisonous stuff that is called wine now, but pure juice from grapes. What did they do, Mary?

Mary. It doesn't say they did anything. Perhaps there was no place where they could send and buy more; but the mother of Jesus told him the wine was all gone. I suppose she just leaned over and whispered to him.

James. Do you think he spoke very respectfully to his mother? It sounds rude to me.

Mother. But it certainly was not rude, and I have no doubt Mary understood just what he meant. She knew he could make wine if he chose, and she wanted him to show these people his wonderful power. It was just as if he said, "O lady, what have I to do with such things as that? My time has not come yet to show my power." But Mary felt sure his time was coming, so she said to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto

you, do it." And then, presently, the time did come. The voice that Jesus had been waiting for spoke to him and bade him begin to work miracles. How did he make the wine, James?

James. First he had them fill up the great water jars to the brim. I suppose that was so they could all be sure there was no wine in them. Then he bade the servants draw out some and carry it to the ruler of the feast. It must have been a great deal better than what they had before, because he was surprised to think they had kept it till the last. He called the bridegroom and asked him about it, but the bridegroom does not seem to have known where it came from.

Mary. Do you think the other guests knew about it? It only says, "His disciples believed on him." I should think everybody would have believed.

Mother. They may have believed that this was a man who could do a very wonderful thing, but his disciples believed that he was Christ, the Son of God. Why do you think Jesus wrought this miracle, James? All our Lord's miracles were for some special reason, to help those that were sick or hungry or in trouble, but it does not seem very important that there should have been more wine at the feast.

James. Perhaps he did it just to please his mother, or because these new disciples needed something to make them a little more *sure* about what he could do.

Fennie. Isn't that just what the story says, "manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on him?" They knew he was the Lamb of God before, because John said so and because they had talked with him and they knew he had great wisdom, but now they saw that he had power also. I think Jesus did it just for them.

Mary. Only think how proud that bride must have been to tell people afterward that Jesus was at her wedding feast and turned water into wine!

Mother. We may always have Jesus at our feasts if we desire his presence and take care not to have anything there to offend him. I read of a little girl who heard her pastor say in church that the Lord would come and be a guest in any home where they welcomed him. She remembered that every day her father said, "Be present at our table, Lord," and so that day she set a chair for the guest at the table. Just as they were sitting down a poor man came to the door and asked for food, and the little girl brought him in, saying, joyfully, "See, father, the Lord Jesus could not come himself, so he sent this poor man in his place." These are the two ways in which we may have Jesus for our guest—by his blessed Spirit in our hearts, and in the person of those whom we love and help for his sake.



CHAPTER XI.

A TALK WITH JESUS.

WHEN Jesus went about among the people, teaching and working miracles, a great many of the teachers and rulers came to hear him and see the wonderful things which he did. Most of them were filled with anger and hatred because he told them that they were teaching what was not true, and because he said that they were all sinners, and needed to confess their sins and be forgiven if they wished to enter into God's kingdom. But one of these teachers, called Nicodemus, really wanted to know the truth. He was sure Jesus must be a teacher sent from God, and not a bad man, as the Pharisees said he was, because no one could do such wonderful things as to heal the sick and give sight to the blind unless by God's own power. So one night when Jesus and his disciples were resting after the work of the day Nicodemus came to talk with Jesus and learn from him.

We do not know where they were, but perhaps it was out of doors, in some garden, because Jesus talked about the sound of the wind blowing, as if they could feel it then upon their faces and hear the leaves of the trees moving as it breathed on them. We do not know all the questions which Nicodemus asked or all the things which Jesus answered, but John has told us some of the talk they had. They talked about the way to enter into God's kingdom; that is, to belong to God now as his

dear children and by and by go to be with him forever. That is the very thing you and I need to know, and there is but one way for everybody, so we will listen to what Jesus said to Nicodemus about it. He called it "being born again," because it is like being made new, or like being made alive when we were dead. He said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again."

Everybody must be made new before he can please God. Not a new body, but a new heart that will be pure and loving and obedient. We do not know how it is that God can do this for us, but he has said he will. He says, "A new heart will I give you." When Nicodemus said, "How can these things be?" Jesus said, "You cannot understand how it is; you cannot see God's Spirit any more than you can see the wind; but you can see what the wind does, and so you can see in the lives of people the work of God's Spirit."

Nicodemus thought God only loved the Jews, but Jesus told him that God loved all the world. He loved them so much that he could not leave them in sin and darkness. He planned a way to save them, by sending his own Son into the world.

Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We know you are a teacher come from God;" but Jesus said, "I am very much more than a teacher. I am the only Son of God; I was in heaven; God gave me to save the world; I did not come to be a king, I came to be lifted up on the cross so that no one who looks to me need perish."

One thing which Jesus said to Nicodemus tells all about the way of salvation—whom God wants to save, why he wants to save them, and how it must be done. He wants to save everybody, because he loves everybody, and so everybody who will believe may be saved.

This is what Jesus said: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I hope Nicodemus believed, and said to Jesus as Nathanael did, "Thou art the Son of God." If he did he went home that night with something better than all the wisdom he had ever learned before. And though the wisest man cannot explain just what it means to be born again by the Spirit of God, even a little child may feel and know it who will go to God and say, "For the sake of Jesus take away my evil heart and give me a new heart to love and serve thee." God says to us that he will blot all our sins out of his book, that he will cast them away, and not even remember them again, so that we may begin all over again, as if we were just made new. And then every day and hour he will help and strengthen and teach us so that we may be his children. If we are God's children we shall live to please him, and the way to please him is to be like Jesus Christ. Once a voice spoke from heaven and said of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What if a voice should speak to you and say, "This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased?" That is what God really does say to his children. He sent an angel to say to Daniel, "Thou art greatly beloved;" and Jesus himself said to us, "The Father himself loveth you." So to-night, when you kneel to ask God to help you love him more and serve him better every day, you may think that his own voice softly whispers, "Dear child, I love you; I am well pleased with you; I surely will help you."

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS AT THE WELL.

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ taught the people he did not go into a church or a synagogue and wait until they came to hear him. He went about doing good, and he was always ready to teach. Sometimes he preached in the city streets, or by the seaside, or on the slope of a mountain, with the people sitting around him. Sometimes he talked to great crowds that followed and pressed about him, and sometimes only to his dear disciples, as they walked through the fields or sat resting in some quiet place. We read about his talk with Nicodemus, the wise ruler who came to him by night, and now we are going to hear about another talk that was just for one person alone, not a wise, rich, famous man whom everybody honored, but a poor woman, who was not even a good woman, and whom no Jew would have taken the trouble to teach.

I'll tell you how it was that Jesus met this poor woman. He was going with his disciples from Jerusalem to another part of the country—a long walk, which took several days. On the second day they came to a long green valley between two mountains, the very green valley where Joseph's brothers used to feed their sheep, and where Jacob, their father, once lived. There were no little brooks for the sheep and cattle to drink from, and so Jacob dug a deep well down through the rock till he found a cool spring of water. That gave him and his

A PASTURE WELL IN PALESTINE.



servants and his cattle plenty of water, and for all the years and years since Jacob died the people had gone on drawing water from the well.

It was about noon when Jesus and his disciples came to Jacob's well. Jesus was weary and faint with his journey, so he sat down by the well to rest while his disciples went on to a little village to buy something to eat. They would not be likely to leave Jesus all alone, and no doubt John, the one he loved best, and who tells us this story, stayed with him by the well. They could not get any water, for they had nothing to draw it with, but presently they saw a woman coming from the village to draw water from the well. She had a waterpot, or great jar, to fill with water, and probably a pitcher and rope to draw it up. She was a Samaritan woman, and the Jews hated and despised the Samaritans so that they would have nothing to do with them. They would not take so much as a drink of water from them; so this woman was greatly surprised when Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink." She said, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" The woman knew nothing about Jesus, but Jesus knew all about her. He knew what she was thinking in her heart, he knew all her life, he knew she was not trying to be good and live as God had commanded. But he was sorry for her. His heart was full of love and pity for all; and so, though he was faint and tired, he began to teach this one poor woman, so that she might find the way to God. He told her that if she would only ask he would give her something better than the water which she came so far to draw; he would give her living water, so that she would never be thirsty again. The woman wondered, but she did not understand what Jesus



THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.

“Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.”

meant. She said, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep;" but Jesus explained to her that this living water was the gift of God—his grace, that is like a fountain springing up in the heart, making all good things live and grow, and giving us all wisdom and knowledge, so that we shall know how to please him.

While the woman still wondered who this could be Jesus told her all about her own life and showed her that he knew all she had done. Then the woman said: "I see you are a prophet; can you tell me where is the right place to worship God? Ought we to pray here upon this mountain, or ought we to go to Jerusalem?"

Jesus said: "It makes no difference where you worship God, if you truly worship and obey him in your heart. No other worship is pleasing to him."

Then the woman wondered still more, because she had never heard that God would hear prayer wherever people truly prayed, and she looked at this strange teacher, who spoke as if he knew all things, and said: "I know that some time Messiah is coming to tell us all things." And Jesus said to her, "I that speak unto thee am he."

How do you think the woman looked when she heard that? She had not a word to say. She just left her waterpot there by the well and hurried away to the city where she lived. Can you guess why she went, and what she said when she got there?

She said, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

She was just like Andrew and Philip: when she heard of Christ she wanted others to hear of him also, and she called everyone to come. We shall hear more about her.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOWING AND REAPING.

JUST before the poor Samaritan woman started to return to the city the disciples came back to the well with the food they had bought. They saw the woman, and they wondered that Jesus should take the trouble to speak to her; but they did not ask any questions, and presently, when she went away, they brought the food to Jesus and begged him to eat. But Jesus answered, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." What did he mean by that? The disciples did not understand; they looked at each other and talked together, and perhaps they asked John, "Has anyone brought him anything to eat?" Then Jesus explained to them that even when he was faint and tired it was better than food to him to do God's work and teach people how they might find the living water. He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." This poor woman whom they despised was one of God's children. When a child is very sick the mother watches it so anxiously, and is so eager to do something to help and relieve it, that she often forgets to eat; and then, when the child opens its eyes and shows that it is better, the mother is so happy she forgets that she is tired and worn out. Her love makes her forget food and rest. That was the way with our Lord Jesus. He went about doing good and thinking only how he could save people.

When Jesus said, "My meat is to finish God's work,"

the disciples thought in their hearts that it was not worth while to spend words of truth upon just one woman. They thought it was like sowing good seed where it never could grow. But Jesus told them to lift up their eyes and look. What did they see? Why, a great company of people coming from the city and hastening over the plain to the well, all eager to see and hear this strange teacher of whom the woman had told them. She went through the streets saying to everyone whom she met, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; he is out yonder by Jacob's well."

Jesus told his disciples that the world was like a harvest field, where the grain was already ripe, and they were sent out to gather it in. When people sow wheat they expect to wait a long time for it to grow and ripen. In that country, when they sowed the seed, they said, "In four months the harvest will come." But this good seed that Jesus had planted grew up at once and began to multiply. A great many of the Samaritans believed just because of what the woman told them, and they came to Jesus themselves to learn more. They were so eager to hear and to have others learn about this blessed teacher that they begged Jesus not to go on his journey, but to stay and teach them. So Jesus stayed with them two days, and many more believed on him, and said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

I am sure the very happiest person in all that city was the poor woman who brought the news to them, and said, "Come and see Jesus." She had sowed good seed, too, and it had grown wonderfully; so she was one of God's laborers just the same as the disciples and the

prophets and all the good people that ever had lived. Some of God's laborers prepare the ground, some sow the seed, and some gather it in, but they are all one company, and Jesus said by and by they will all meet and rejoice together. Children often help to plant the fields. I have seen a whole family working together, the father plowing the ground, the older children smoothing and marking it into furrows, and the very little ones dropping in the seed. So very little ones have sometimes dropped good seed into some place which God has prepared for it, and our Father himself looks after every seed that is planted with prayer and love. A wicked man was once converted by reading a Sunday school lesson leaf which a little girl threw from the window of a railroad train. It fell at his feet as he stood upon the platform, and he picked it up and read it, and God sent the message home to his heart.

Every one of you may scatter good seed at home, among your own brothers and sisters, and at school among your mates ; and every one of you, by being good yourself and helping others to be good, may help to gather in God's harvest. Just hear what Jesus said to his disciples and to *you* : "He that reapeth receiveth wages." What wages will you have if you work for God? What wages do you get when you try to help and please your mother? Could anything make you so glad as when she says, "Nobody but mother knows how many tired steps that little girl saves me," or "Nobody but mother knows what a help she is in making things move smoothly and pleasantly and keeping the others from trouble and disobedience."

Just such precious wages God gives you when he says to you every night, "Dear child, I have seen how you

have tried to please me ; you are sowing good seed in your own heart, and in the hearts of others ; you are helping to gather fruit for life eternal ; you shall have blessed wages every day, and by and by all my workmen will come home and rejoice together."



CHAPTER XIV.

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.

WHEN Jesus had stayed two days with the people at Samaria he went on his journey to Galilee. He did not go to his own town of Nazareth, but to Cana, the place where he turned the water into wine at the wedding feast. Nathanael lived there, and a good many of the friends of Jesus and all the people were glad to have him come, for they had been to Jerusalem and seen the wonderful things which he had done there. About twenty-five miles from Cana was a beautiful blue lake or little sea, called the Sea of Galilee. All along its shores were little towns with white houses, pleasant fields, and green hills. Every day the fishermen went out in their little boats to catch fish from the sea, and Jesus himself often walked along the shores or sailed across to the other side. In one of these towns, called Capernaum, lived a nobleman who was one of the emperor's officers. He had servants and money and was a great man, but now there was sorrow and trouble in his home. The nobleman's son was very sick with a fever. No one could help him, and day after day he grew worse, until they saw that he must die. One day some one came to the father and said: "Do you know that Jesus, the prophet who made wine from water at Cana, and who healed so many sick people in Judea, has come back to Cana? They say he cures even leprosy and the most dreadful diseases just by laying his hand upon the sick and bidding them arise."



JESUS PREACHING BY THE SEA OF GALILEE.

The father said: "I will go at once and bring him down here to cure my son if he does not die before I can get him."

So he left the sick child burning and tossing with fever and hastened to Cana to ask where he could find Jesus. Some one showed him where Jesus was, and he begged him to come with him to Capernaum and heal his child. Jesus pitied all who were in trouble, and he pitied this father's sorrow, but he wanted him to understand that he need not go to Capernaum to cure his boy; he could do it by just speaking the word. He said to the father, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe;" as if he had said, "Can you not believe on me without seeing me do this?" But the poor father could not think of anything but his boy. He said again, "Sir, come down quickly before my child die!" Even then it might be too late, for he had left him at the very point of death. Then Jesus said, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." Would the father believe without seeing? Would he go home quietly and leave Jesus behind? Yes; in his heart that minute he believed the word that Jesus had spoken, and he went on his way. But how long the journey was, and how impatient he felt to see with his own eyes that his son was healed!

Presently he sees some people coming to meet him. As they come nearer he sees they are his own servants. Are they bringing word that the child is dead? O no; they say just as Jesus did, "Thy son liveth; yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him."

Yesterday, at the seventh hour! That was the very hour when Jesus spoke the word; so the father and all the family believed on Jesus.

How eager they must have been to see Jesus! I do

not think they waited for Jesus to come, but went to look in his face and thank him for his loving power.

Does Jesus heal the sick now? Can we go to him when our friends are sick and beg him to come and cure them? Certainly we may, and he hears us just as surely as he heard the nobleman when he came to him at Cana. God alone can cure sickness, and whether he makes sick people well in an instant, or lets them come slowly back again to health, it is always he who heals.

Sometimes it is not best for us to be cured at once. Pain and suffering teach us many lessons; they teach us to be sorry for others who suffer; they teach us to be patient, and they teach us to be careful not to do things that make us sick. God wants us to take care of our bodies, and sickness makes us remember what we sometimes forget. Sometimes when we ask him very earnestly to cure those whom we love he does not do it, because he sees that this is not the best for us or for them. We cannot understand all about these things now, but we can be sure that whatever he does is the very best thing, and some day he will tell us all about it.

So when we are sick ourselves, or when our friends are sick, we will go to our loving Father and ask him to heal them, to show us what to do for them, to bless whatever we do, and, above all things, to help us to take patiently and lovingly whatever he thinks best. Sometimes God makes sick people well by giving them new bodies. Just as your mother might say of your dress, "It is so torn and worn out it is not worth mending; I will get you a new one," so our Father says about our sick bodies, "They are worn out and full of pain; you shall come and live with me and have a new body that will never be sick."

CHAPTER XV.

JESUS FORGIVING SIN.

PALESTINE, where our Lord lived, was a very small country, and, though they had no railroads or telegraphs or newspapers, the people at Jerusalem soon learned of any important thing that took place in other parts from travelers who came to the city on business or to attend the great feasts at the temple.

So the scribes and the Pharisees, who had been so much disturbed by the teaching and the miracles of Jesus in Judea, learned that he was preaching in Capernaum to crowds who followed him wherever he went, and doing even more wonderful miracles than he had done in Jerusalem. A number of them went to Capernaum, some from Jerusalem and other cities of Judea, and some from the towns of Galilee nearer by, to watch, and to listen, and see what could be done with this strange teacher. Jesus was in Peter's house, teaching the people who had gathered about him, and these Pharisees and wise men, who thought they knew all about the way to be righteous and serve God, sat by to hear what he would say. The power of the Lord was with him, and he not only taught the people, but healed the sick among them. Every moment the crowd grew. They filled the room and the doorway, and even about the door, pressing upon each other closer and closer, until there was no room for another one. Presently four men came down the street bringing between them a man that was palsied



"AND HE LAID HIS HANDS ON THEM AND HEALED THEM."

and helpless. Would not the multitude take pity on this poor, helpless, suffering man, and let them bring him to Jesus. No; the multitude would not give way; everyone thought only of himself and of what he wanted. But the friends of this palsied man were not discouraged.

They felt sure if they could only bring him into the presence of Jesus he would be cured, and they were determined to get him there. They carried their burden up some outside stairs leading to the housetop, and, making an opening in the flat roof, they lowered the sick man into the midst of the people, right before Jesus.

Jesus stopped in his discourse and looked at them, the sick man lying helpless before him and his friends looking eagerly down from above.

He saw their faith. He could see it in their faces and in their hearts, that were open to his sight, but he could also see it in their actions. We do not take so much trouble to get anything unless we believe it is of great value and unless we really expect to get it. They believed Jesus had power to heal and that he would heal.

But when he spoke he said nothing about the palsy. He saw in the sick man a worse disease, and one that only God could cure; he saw that he was sinful and repentant, and he said to him, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

I think after that the man would have been satisfied even if his body had not been healed, for there is no suffering like the suffering from sin. A skillful physician was once attending a sick man and saw that for some reason his medicines did not have any effect. At last he said to the patient, "You have something on your mind which worries you; tell me what it is, or I cannot help you."

The man finally owned that he had committed a crime the thought of which would not let him rest. The physician could not say, as Jesus did, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and so take away at once the shame and distress and sense of guilt, but he sent for the man who had been wronged, and when the sick man had confessed his deed and been forgiven he found peace with God.

"Now," said the physician, "I can cure your body."

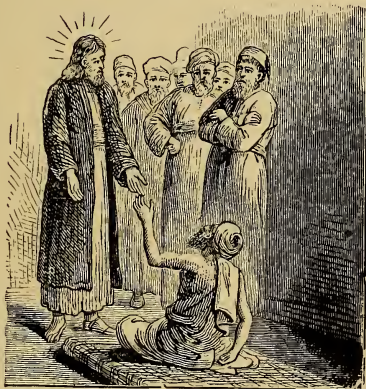
"Ah," said the patient, "I had forgotten I was sick."

When the scribes and Pharisees heard Jesus say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," they were displeased. They knew no *man* could forgive sins, and they thought in their hearts, "This is blasphemy; who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus answered their thoughts as if they had spoken them aloud: "You think it is easier to *say*, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' than to say, 'Rise up and walk,' because everyone can see whether the command to walk is obeyed. But that you may know that I really have power to forgive sins I will use that power in another way."

Then he bade the palsied man arise and take up his couch and go to his house, and immediately he rose up, took up what he was lying on, and went away glorifying God. Soul and body both were healed, and his lips were filled with praise, for he knew, if the Pharisees did not, that this was the work of God. I think the friends who had brought him were almost as glad as he; indeed, all the people praised God also, and were filled with fear and astonishment, for no such thing had ever been seen or heard before. A physician who healed the

body by his word was wonderful, but here was one who healed the soul, who had power on earth to forgive sins. Who was he? What must he be, since none can forgive sins but God alone? He said he was the Son of God; was it not true?



CHAPTER XVI.

JESUS AT NAZARETH.

IT was more than a year since Jesus had entered upon his public work by his baptism in the river Jordan and his victory over Satan. He had been with his disciples to Jerusalem and many cities of Judea and Galilee, teaching the people, healing the sick, and doing many miracles, and now, at last, he came back to his own home at Nazareth, where he had grown up. His neighbors and acquaintances would be likely to hear of his coming and to talk about it among themselves. One man might say, "Have you heard that Jesus, the son of Joseph, has come home? They say he does not work any more, but claims to be a great prophet, and goes about teaching the people as if he were wiser than the scribes and Pharisees."

And his neighbor might answer, "I have heard that he really has done some wonderful things. They say that at Cana he turned water into wine; a man who was at Jerusalem at the feast of the passover saw him heal, by his word, one who had been helpless for almost forty years, and over yonder at Capernaum he has cast out devils and healed multitudes of sick folk."

The first man would, perhaps, shake his head and answer, "Do you think the son of a poor carpenter, who has grown up here among us and never been taught in the schools, can be any wiser than other people? But they will ask him to read from the law in the synagogue



IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT NAZARETH.

"As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read."

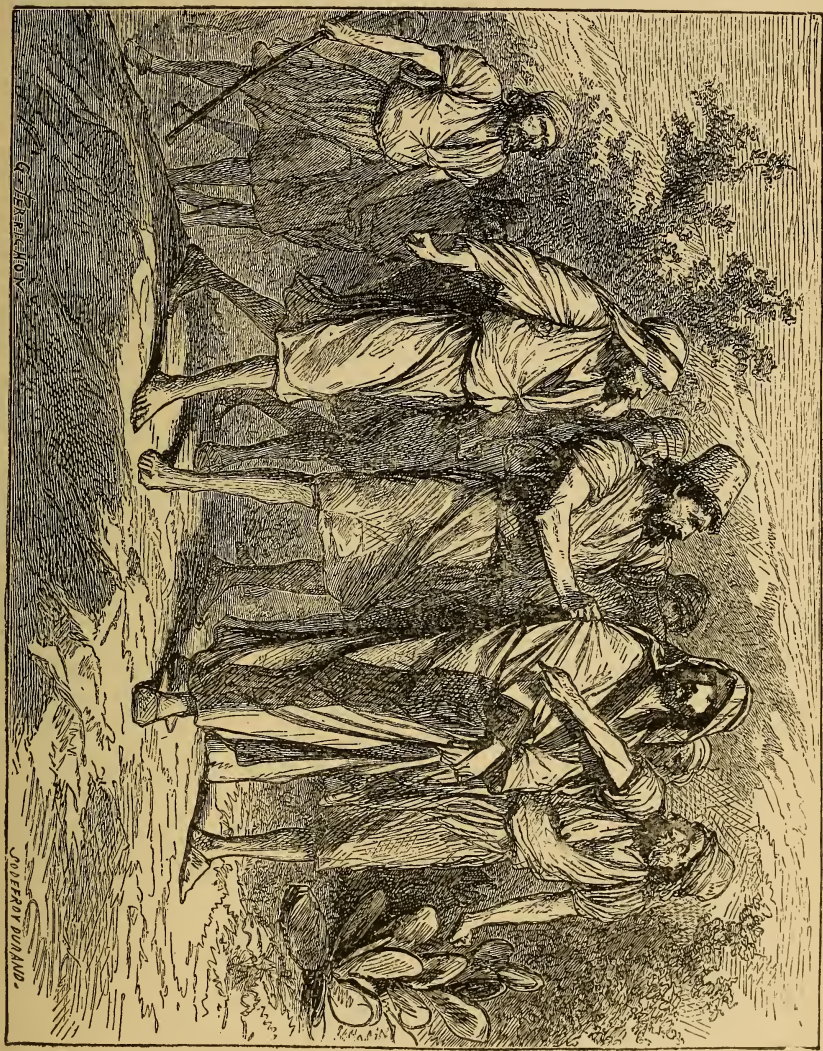
to-morrow, and we will go and hear what he has to say. I should like to see him do some of his miracles. There are plenty of lame and blind and sick folks here."

When the Sabbath came the people filled the synagogue, sitting around on the floor, as their custom was, and Jesus went up into the little desk where they could all see him. Every synagogue had a copy of the law of God written on parchment and rolled up, which was kept with great care. They handed this roll to Jesus, and he found the place, and read aloud to them. The words were some that Isaiah had written years before, when God had shown him the Saviour and told him what he would do and say. Jesus read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He closed the book, gave it back to the minister, and sat down, while the eyes of all the people were fastened on him. They had heard those words a great many times, and they knew very well that Isaiah was talking about the Saviour they were expecting; that it was he who was to be filled with the Spirit, that he might open the eyes of the blind, deliver the captives, and heal the broken-hearted. What was this man who claimed to be a prophet going to tell them about the Saviour? He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." That was the same as saying, "This Saviour whom Isaiah wrote of has come. He is here before you. I am he." And then he went on to explain and to teach, while they all wondered at his wise and gracious words.

But they were not ready to believe what he said, or

" And they led him to the brow of the hill, that they might cast him down headlong."

JESUS AT NAZARETH.



to forsake their sins. They talked among themselves and said, "How can this man save us? Is not this Joseph's son? If he wants us to believe on him why does he not do some of the wonderful things he did in Capernaum?" Jesus heard their whisperings and fault-finding; but he would not use his divine power just to win their praise and make them wonder at him. He knew they would not receive him, and he reminded them that it had often been so with prophets, and that even the old prophets of whom they were so proud, had done their greatest miracles for people of other nations.

The people in the synagogue had not come to be shown their sins, they wanted to see a miracle; and when Jesus talked in this way to them they rose up full of anger, and, seizing Jesus, bore him along toward the hill on which the town was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But Jesus was not yet ready to lay down his life, and no man could take it from him. He passed quietly through the midst of the angry crowd and went his way to another city.

The people of Nazareth were too proud to receive God's message, because it did not come in a way to please them. Jesus came "to preach the Gospel to the poor," but they thought they were rich; "to heal the broken-hearted," but they did not think they had any sins to mourn over; to "preach deliverance to the captives," but they did not understand that they were Satan's slaves; "to open the eyes of the blind," but they thought only of blindness of bodily eyes. After Jesus went away very likely they said, "How wise we were! Those people at Capernaum may believe on him, but we know better. We will have nothing to do with him."

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

ABOUT twenty-five miles from Capernaum, on the slope of a mountain, was a little city called Nain. The name means "lovely," and in the time of our Lord it probably was a beautiful town, with pleasant gardens shut in by its high walls, and vineyards and olive trees on the slopes outside. The only way for travelers to reach it was by a steep road leading up the mountain to the gate, and it is not likely that many people except the inhabitants of the city went in and out. But walls and gates cannot keep away sickness and death, and they found their way into this little city of Nain. From time to time sorrow had come to its homes and some loved one had been carried out through the city gate to be laid away in the tombs that were cut among the rocky caves outside.

Sickness came one day to a home in Nain. Death had been there before; the husband and father had died, and the mother was left with but one child, a son who could comfort her and care for her, and now he too was sick unto death. Everyone pitied her and thought it was very hard for this young man to be taken away from his mother, but in that day they could do very little for sickness.

Yet to this city must have come the fame of a prophet who was going about through the towns and villages healing all kinds of diseases, opening the eyes of the

blind, and casting out evil spirits. Some of the people of Nain may have seen these wonderful cures, and the poor mother watching by her sick boy may have lifted her heart in prayer to God that he would send this great healer before it was too late. If she did God certainly heard her prayer, though he did not seem to answer it; the healer did not come, and her son died. They prepared the body for burial, wrapping it in a linen cloth and laying it upon a bier, and men carried it out through the gate of Nain, the broken-hearted mother weeping beside it, and many people from the city following with her.

But when they got a little way from the gate they met another procession coming up the road. Jesus, the great healer, was coming to Nain with his disciples and a great multitude. This was the man who could send away disease by his word and heal the sick instantly by a touch. The sight of him must have added to the poor mother's distress. O, why had he not come sooner, that he might have cured her son? Only one day sooner, instead of waiting at Capernaum! But now it was too late.

Jesus, who saw the faith in the heart of the palsied man, saw her faith also. She believed he could heal, but she had never dreamed of a power that could raise the dead. Yet what did it mean that he bade her "weep not?" Could there even now be any help? The voice, so full of tenderness and compassion, seemed full of authority also, and as Jesus turned from the mother and touched the bier with his hand the bearers stood still and all the multitude waited in silence. Is he going to comfort this mourner by explaining to her that some day God will raise the dead, and she will have her son again?

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No, he does not speak to the mother. He speaks to the young man lying dead upon the bier, and this is his command :

“Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.”

If there were any scribes and Pharisees in that procession they had no time even to say in their hearts, “Who is this that speaketh blasphemies?” for this voice reached the deaf ears of the young man, and he was no longer dead. The command was instantly obeyed ; he that was dead sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Just think of that procession that had come so sorrowfully out at the gate, the friends weeping, the hired mourners wailing, the poor mother in her tears and despair, now going joyfully back again with the multitude that had come from Capernaum, mother and son praising God and the people looking on in fear and wonder even while they glorified God for coming to help his people.

Why did not Jesus speak the word and call from the sepulchers near by all the dead ? And why did he not go into Nain and heal all the sick there ? His work was to bring healing that should help all the world, in all ages, and he raised the dead and wrought all his miracles only that men should have no excuse for doubting his authority or refusing to obey his voice. As a king who had gone to some part of his dominion in disguise, that he might better learn to know his people, might think best to show his signet ring in proof of his rank and authority, so Jesus showed his authority over disease, evil spirits, and death, that men might know that he had power to forgive sins also.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MESSAGE FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE last time we heard anything about John the Baptist he was living in the desert regions beyond the river Jordan and preaching to great crowds of people who came out there to hear him. You remember how he was dressed in his rough, coarse garment woven of camel's hair and fastened with a girdle of leather, and how to everyone who came he had but one message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." No matter whether he was talking to the poor despised publican or to Herod the ruler, he told everybody there was but one way to enter God's kingdom, and that was to turn away from sin, and that if they did not leave off sinning and learn to do right God would destroy them as the gardener cuts down and burns up trees that do not bear fruit. Herod did not like this kind of preaching; he was angry because John told him of his sins, and instead of repenting he sent his soldiers to take John and shut him up in prison.

Very soon after the Lord Jesus came to John to be baptized Herod shut John up in his prison beyond Jordan. He could not get out, but his disciples came often to see him and told him what Jesus was doing. John would never forget that day when he saw the Spirit like a dove descending upon Jesus and heard the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son." He thought about it in his lonesome prison, and he felt very sure that

JOHN THE BAPTIST IN PRISON.
"Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ he sent two of his disciples to him."



pretty soon this Son of God who had come into the world would leave his humble, lowly life, and make himself King. He waited and waited, and when his disciples came he would ask, "What is he doing now?" They would tell him about his teaching and his wonderful miracles, but still he did not seem to be any nearer making himself King. So, month after month, John stayed in prison until he had been there a year and a half, and he was very much perplexed. At last John said, "I'll send and ask Jesus about it; he will tell us what it means and whether we have made any mistake."

So he sent two of his disciples into Galilee, where Jesus was. They found him at his work among the people who crowded about him. By and by they found a chance to ask their question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Jesus did not say "yes" to their question. He had told people, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and so he bade them go home and tell John what they had seen and heard. A great many years before that one of God's prophets had said that when the Saviour came into the world he would do just what Jesus did. He would give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; the lepers should be cleansed and the lame made to walk; the dead should be raised, and the poor who had no one to care for them should hear the good news of God's great love. John's disciples saw Jesus do these wonderful things, and heard his blessed words, and then Jesus sent them away to tell John, and bid him be patient and trust, even if he could not understand God's way.

In the multitude about Jesus were many who had gone out to hear John preach, and now they were thinking to themselves, "This man could not have been a

great prophet after all, or he would not have sent such a message. He said Jesus was the Saviour, but now he has changed his mind. He was very bold and fearless, but now that he is shut up in prison, and half starved, he is discouraged and afraid."

Jesus knew their thoughts even if they did not speak them, and he began to talk to them about John. He asked them if they thought this man was like a reed that was bent by every wind, that he could be turned out of the way or changed by the fear of Herod. He asked them if they thought he cared so much for soft clothing and dainty food that he would give up the truth because of the prison or even death. And then he told them that John was not only a true prophet, but greater than any other prophet, because he was the messenger sent to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. The other prophets could only say, "Some time he is coming," but John could say, "*He is here.*" He could point to him and say, "*Behold the Lamb of God.*"

That very message which made John the greatest among men we may every one of us carry to others. Jesus said of John, "He was a burning and a shining light ;" and so he says of all his children, "Ye are the light of the world."



CHAPTER XIX.

JESUS AT BETHESDA.

IT was a beautiful Sabbath day in Jerusalem. Great crowds of people were in the city who had come from other parts of the country to worship at the temple. They walked along the streets talking together, but there was no noise, no one buying or selling or carrying any burdens, because it was the Sabbath day, and the people might not even light fires to cook their food. It was not yet time for the service at the temple, and perhaps some company of strangers said, "Let us go to the pool of Bethesda and watch to see when the water moves."

This pool of Bethesda was a fountain of water near one of the city gates. Once in a while the water bubbled up as if it were boiling, and the people thought that if a sick person were put into the water at the very instant, before anyone else got in, he would be cured. So there were always a great many sick people lying there by the pool, each one eager to be the first to get in. When the strangers passed by they would see them lying there on little rugs such as were used for beds in that country. Some of the sick people had friends to take care of them and help them, but one poor man lay all alone on his bed. He could not move his limbs at all; he was probably like a man whom a missionary saw once in Syria who could only use his arms, and who lay all day on a rug by the roadside begging, and at night dragged himself away by sticking two little sticks

into the ground and slowly pulling his body along. I am sure the man had a sorrowful face, for he had been helpless for thirty-eight years, and though he had in some way been brought to the pool of Bethesda he had no one to put him into the water, and had just about given up trying. But on this Sabbath morning, while so many were passing by, one among the crowd stopped and pitied him, and asked a strange question. He asked, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The poor man looked up in wonder and answered, "Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool."

The stranger did not say, "I will put you into the pool." He said, "Rise, take thy bed, and walk." What a wonderful command to a man who had lain helpless for so many years! But the instant the words were spoken the man was made perfectly well. He got up and rolled up his rug and walked; but this strange friend had slipped away in the crowd and was gone before he could thank him or ask his name. One thing he was sure of, he knew that only God could so wonderfully make him well, and he wanted to thank him for it. Before his trouble came upon him he had not been a good man, but now he was sorry for his sin, so he went up to the temple to pray, and there he found the one who had said to him, "Rise up and walk." We know very well who this stranger was who could heal all kinds of sickness, make the blind to see and the lame to walk. It was Jesus the Saviour of men. The man's heart must have been full of gratitude, and he would say to himself as he went to the temple, "How good it seems to walk once more and feel my body strong and well! How good it is to go once more into God's house! What can I do to show how thankful and glad I am?" Jesus

saw him there in the temple and came to him and told him just how he could best show his thankfulness. Jesus said to him, "Behold, thou art made whole ; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

That is the way to show that we are truly thankful for God's goodness when he raises us up from sickness or keeps us in health—by being careful not to sin against him ; by loving him more and serving him better.

Is it not strange to think that there were some people in Jerusalem who were not glad to have this poor man cured? Some of the Jews said to him, "It is the Sabbath ; you must not carry your bed." The man answered them that Jesus, the man that made him whole, had bidden him do it ; but that only made them hate Jesus the more and even seek to kill him for doing such blessed work on the Sabbath day. They did not really care about the Sabbath, but they hated Jesus because he did wonderful things which they could not do, and because he said God was his Father.



CHAPTER XX.

THE SABBATH DAY.

A WISE and loving father once spent long years in preparing a beautiful home for his children, and when all was ready for them he placed them there to live for a time. They were not to be idle, but to work, and a great deal was left for them to do. Their father knew that idleness was not good for them, but he did not wish them to become so interested in this work as not to take the rest they needed, or so absorbed in thinking and planning for it that they should forget him, stay away from his house, and grow to be like strangers to him. He loved his children, and he wanted them to love him and come to him freely for counsel ; but because he knew they would not be wise enough to decide for themselves about such things he gave them a rule for work and rest. He told them to be diligent and industrious in attending to their work, but that when they had worked for six days they must stop and take a day of rest. They were to call this rest day " their father's day," because it was not only that their bodies might be refreshed and strengthened, but because on that day all who could were to go and see their father and talk with him at his own house. They were to think about him, to send loving messages to him, to see if they could not do some special thing to please him, and to talk with each other about his wishes.

This rest day, this " father's day," was meant to be a

helpful, happy day, that might continually remind the children of their father's love and care and help them to grow more like him and understand his wishes better.

But after a while these foolish children forgot that the day was for love and counsel and thanks, and only remembered it was for rest. They were very careful to stop all their work; they even made hundreds of very silly rules about the little things that must not be done on the rest day; but it was not the father's day any more, as he had meant it to be.

This was the way the Lord gave the Sabbath day to his children, and in this way the people had come to make it a day without any meaning at all. And just as this father might have sent his beloved son who had never been separated from him, and understood his thoughts and wishes, to teach these foolish children, so our Father in heaven sent Jesus Christ to show what this rest day was really meant to be, and to say to them, "This is your Father's day, but, it was meant for your help; it was made for you."

He taught by his example. He always kept holy the Sabbath day, but he did many things which the teachers of the Jews had forbidden. He taught that it was right to feed the hungry on the Sabbath, and to relieve those who were sick and suffering. He taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath, but he also taught in houses on that day, speaking to those that gathered about the door.

He went to worship with the congregation, but he stopped his teaching to heal a poor sufferer who did not even ask for help, a woman who for eighteen years had been bowed together so that she could not lift herself up. She did not speak, but Jesus saw her; he called



HEALING THE WOMAN.

her to him ; he told her she was loosed from her infirmity ; he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and broke out in praise and thanksgiving to God.

No doubt there was commotion among the people, for they glorified God and rejoiced, and when the ruler of the synagogue, who was really angry with Jesus, rebuked them for coming to be healed on the Sabbath the Lord rebuked him. He told him he was not honest, since those who forbade the healing of disease on the Sabbath would themselves do what they called necessary work, such as taking care of their cattle. Men and women are of more value than cattle, and whatever we can do to relieve their souls or their bodies from that which bows them down we may do on the Sabbath. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day."

How shall we tell what is really doing good?

By observing whether or not it leads people to glorify God.

What we do on the Sabbath should be more than harmless ; it must be helpful ; it must help us to understand God better ; bring us into sympathy with him ; give new strength to the soul as well as the body ; lift us up that we may glorify God.

What we do for others should have the same result. Satan binds bodies as well as souls ; poverty, disease, suffering, ignorance, are all more or less his chains. It is lawful to loose them on the Sabbath day, and in this way we make the Sabbath truly "the Lord's day," and share with our Father the work from which he never rests.

CHAPTER XXI.

FOLLOWING JESUS.

WHEREVER Jesus went along the roads from village to village there was always a multitude following him, listening to hear what he said and watching to see what he would do. A great many persons followed him because they hoped he was going to make himself their king and lead them against the Romans who had conquered them. Even the disciples had some such idea as this, and one day when they were on a journey Jesus began to talk to the disciples who were close about him, to try to make them understand that he had not come to be an earthly king.

He asked them first what people said about him, and they told him that some said he was Elijah, and some John the Baptist, and some one of the prophets. Then he asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" and Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ." Peter was very sure who Jesus was; he knew he was the Son of the living God, sent to save the people from their sins, but he did not understand at all how he was to do this. So when Jesus began to tell the disciples that he was going to die for the sins of the world, that he must suffer many things, that the scribes and the elders would refuse to believe him and reject him, and that he should be killed, but that the third day he should rise again, they were all astonished, and Peter began to rebuke him. He said, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee."

Peter was very bold and brave, and he thought he would die himself rather than let any harm come to his Lord ; but Jesus rebuked him for thinking that he was wiser than his Master. And then he began to explain to his disciples and to all the people what kind of a spirit those must have who truly followed him.

They must not think that the best thing was to be great and rich and powerful in this world, and so choose that ; but they must understand that the best thing was to serve and please God and help him in saving the world. Jesus came to seek and to save lost men ; and to do it he willingly laid aside all the glory that he had in heaven, and suffered and died, bearing shame and contempt and hatred, all for the sake of saving others.

Do we want to be his followers ? Then we, like him, must think, not of ourselves, but of others. Jesus said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself."

To come after Jesus is to be his follower and go wherever he leads. If we do this he will be our Captain, and give us our orders, just as the captain directs the soldiers who follow him when to march and when to stop, and whether to turn to the right hand or the left. It would not do at all to have two captains, one saying "Halt !" when the other said "March !" The soldiers would never conquer the enemy, and would only lose their own lives. And so Jesus says if we take him for our Captain we must not have any other. We must not listen to the orders of that other captain called Self, who says, "Stay here and rest," when Jesus says, "Follow me." We must turn him out, send him away, *deny him*, say we will not obey or listen to him.

"Take up his cross." When we have turned away from self and chosen Jesus for our Captain, we must take

up cheerfully anything he gives us to do, and bear burdens for others as he did for us. Sometimes it may be something that we dislike very much; sometimes it is a great, hard thing, and sometimes it is only little things that have to be done over and over, day after day; but we are to go on doing them bravely and cheerfully and lovingly for his sake, just as he bore his cross for ours. To take up your cross is to be willing to do whatever God wants you to do, whether it is hard or easy, and to follow on in this way day after day and year after year.

“And follow me.” For when you have chosen Jesus for your Captain, and turned away from self and taken up the burdens he gives you to bear, then you are to follow your leader. He will never send you on alone. He will always go before you, so you can hear his voice. You can speak to him, and he will speak to you, and he will always give you strength and health and comfort.

It is the happiest way to live. Those who serve self, and think only how they can please themselves, fail in the very things they strive after. They are not really happy here, and by and by, when they come to the end of life, they find that they have wasted and lost the time in which they might have been preparing themselves for a more glorious world. They have lost this life, and so lost the precious chance God gave them to fit themselves to live with him. And Jesus will have to say, “These are not mine; I do not know them. They have not been following me. I called them, but they would not listen; they chose to please themselves.” If we would have Jesus own us by and by, and say before the angels in heaven, “These are mine, my precious ones,” we must choose him now for our leader and follow him all the way.

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE DAY WITH JESUS.

DO you know that the Bible only tells us a very few of the things that Jesus did? If Peter and John and Philip had written the story of every day we should have books and books filled with stories of where Jesus went with his disciples and what Jesus said and did. Here is the story of just one day that John has written down for us, and if we try we can see it all as plainly as if we had been there ourselves.

First, let us think about the place. Here we are in the little town of Capernaum, the place where the nobleman lived whose son was so sick. You can see the very house over yonder, with a great garden full of palm trees around it. All around you are green hills, and right before you the same blue Sea of Galilee where Peter and Andrew used to go fishing.

See, there are some little boats going out now, and there comes Jesus with his disciples, going down to the shore. Jesus is tired; everywhere the sick people follow him and crowd about him, and he cannot rest. He is going away now across the sea to a place near the shore where there is a smooth, grassy hillside. It is a bright, sunny morning, and they soon reach the other side, fasten the little boat, and go up the hillside, where Jesus sits down with his disciples about him. Will he have a long, quiet day to rest? No; for even when he started the people were watching him, and they followed along



JESUS TEACHING THE FISHERMEN.

the shore, until presently, when Jesus looked up, he saw a great company coming to him, men and women and children. They had come a long way, and there they were, away on the side of the mountain, poor, tired, hungry people that had seen the miracles that Jesus did, or at least heard of them.

The dear Lord was filled with pity as he looked at them and knew how sinful and sorrowful they were, and how much they needed to be taught and helped to be good. He said they were like sheep without any shepherd, hungry and lost, and so he taught them, and talked to them, and tried to show them how to serve God. Probably he cured some of the sick among them, and at last he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

Philip and the other disciples were surprised at this question. There was no place to buy out there in the desert, and they were only poor men themselves, with very little money. Philip said, "Why, if we should buy two hundred pennyworth of bread it would not be enough to give each one a little piece." Then, perhaps, Jesus turned to Andrew to see what he would say. Andrew said, "There is a lad here who hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?"

Now Jesus knew just what he would do all the time; and I am sure it would have made him glad if Philip or Andrew had said, "Dear Master, we have no way to feed these hungry people, but you can feed them as easily as you turned the water into wine. You could turn these stones into bread."

But no one said such words, and so Jesus told them to make the people sit down in rows on the grass, and

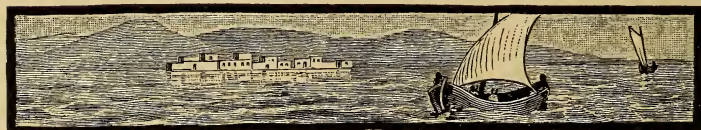
they all sat down—five thousand men and women and children. Think of them sitting there! Can you see them, and Jesus and his disciples standing by? Jesus has the little barley cakes and the dried fishes in his hands, and the little boy who brought them stands near, looking up into his face and wondering what is going to happen. See! Jesus looks up to heaven and gives thanks for the food, and then he begins to break off pieces and give to the disciples. He keeps on breaking and breaking, and still the food does not fail until each disciple has all he can carry, and the disciples pass along the rows of people, giving to everyone, and the food in their hands is not gone until everyone has as much as he wishes for. Strangest of all, when they have done eating Jesus tells his disciples to take their baskets and gather up the fragments that are left, and they find twelve basketsfull of them.

What will the people do now? Do you see how they are talking together? They say, "Let us take this man and make him king! He does the most wonderful things that ever were heard of. If we had him for a king he would give us food and heal us when we were sick."

They do not love him or wish to be taught how to be good, but they want to be fed. And this tired Jesus, who has been all day serving them, now tells his disciples to go down to the ship and go back to Capernaum while he himself goes away alone to some quiet place up the mountain where he can pray and rest. It is growing dark now, and a storm is coming up. The people are hurrying to find shelter, and out on the sea the great waves are tossing the boat about and the wind beats down upon it. Philip and Andrew and Peter are good sailors, but in spite of all their rowing they cannot

reach the shore, and they drift about until after midnight. Then some one sees a strange sight. Over yonder across the water they see some one who seems to be walking on the waves. They watch this appearance coming nearer and nearer, and just as they cry out for fear they hear the voice of Jesus saying, "It is I; be not afraid." How glad they are to have Jesus once more with them! Now they will not be afraid of the storm. But, see, there is no storm! the sea is smooth again, and, instead of being away out from shore, here they are right in the harbor, just where they wanted to go.

Was not this a wonderful day?



CHAPTER XXIII.

FEEDING THE MULTITUDE.

THE twelve disciples whom Jesus chose for his closest friends and companions had been away for some time from their Master. He had sent them out by two and two through the villages of Galilee to teach and to preach. He had given them power to work miracles in his name, and these disciples, who must have gone out with a good deal of fear and trembling, found that even the evil spirits were obedient to them through the name of Jesus. It began to seem as if the kingdom of their Lord was going to be set up at once, but in the midst of their rejoicing a dreadful thing happened.

Herod, the cruel ruler who had shut up John the Baptist in prison, beheaded him there to please a wicked woman who hated him. The disciples were troubled and alarmed. They could not understand why this messenger, whom Jesus had said was greater than any prophet that ever had lived, should be left to die. What if Herod should seize their own dear Master also? They must go to him for counsel. So, gathering themselves together, they went back to Jesus to tell him all they had done, as well as the sorrowful news about his messenger.

Jesus saw that they needed rest; he himself was weary also, and yet the multitudes gave him no time so much as to eat in peace, so he took his disciples and sailed away across the Sea of Galilee to a desert place beyond

Bethsaida. But it was not possible to get away from the people. They saw where he was going, and ran on foot along the shore, until, in the desert place where Jesus had landed, he was surrounded by thousands of people, men, women, and children, a great helpless flock that looked to Jesus like sheep without any shepherd.

Instead of sending them away Jesus welcomed them; instead of leaving them to seek his own rest he talked to them about the kingdom of God; he had pity on their bodies and healed those that had need of healing, and by and by, when evening drew near, and he thought how far they were from home, and that they must be faint and hungry, he bade his disciples give them food to eat.

The disciples were astonished. They forgot what wonderful things they had been doing in the name of Jesus, and, instead of saying, "Yes, Lord, we will, only tell us how to begin," they said, "Why, it would take two hundred pennyworth of bread just to give each one a little, and we have only five barley loaves and two small fishes that a lad has brought; what would they be among so many? Shall we go and buy food for them all?" Once, we are told, our Lord looked sorrowfully upon his disciples, being troubled because of their unbelief, and no doubt it troubled him to see it now, but he was very patient with them.

He bade them seat the multitudes upon the grass in companies of fifty, and then he took in his hands the food they had brought, and, looking up to heaven, gave thanks for it. The five loaves and the two fishes were God's gift as much as the great multitude of fishes that filled Simon's net, and for all his gifts we are to give thanks. What God sends is always enough for our

needs if he blesses it, and so, as Jesus went on breaking the food and giving it to his disciples, they fed rank after rank and company after company of the hungry people, and still there was plenty in their hands. They ate, not until each one had a little, but until all were filled, and even then there were pieces enough left to fill twelve baskets, or pockets, such as the Jews carried hanging from the girdle when they went upon a journey.

There was one person whose part in this miracle we must not forget. We think first of the Lord Jesus, whose divine power multiplied the small portion that was put in his hands, just as now he blesses and makes increase all our service that we honestly devote to him; then we think of the disciples, who were not only fed themselves, but sent to feed others, and yet had more left than before they began; but we ought also to remember the little lad to whom the loaves and fishes belonged. Perhaps it was his own supper, the barley cakes and dried fish, and he gave it up at the bidding of Jesus; or perhaps he had brought it for the Master, and had not courage to offer it. How glad he must have been that he brought it, and what a wonderful story he had to tell when he went home that night to his father and mother! Did he remember what Jesus had said about the kingdom of God, as well as what he had done?



CHAPTER XXIV.

COMING TO JESUS.

THE people whom Jesus had fed with the loaves and fishes did not go very far away. They saw the disciples get into the little boat and row away toward Capernaum, but Jesus was not with them, so they felt sure he was still somewhere near by. But in the morning they could not find him, and they concluded that in some way he must have gone back to Capernaum, so they went on board some boats and went over there also. They found him at Capernaum, and they were very much astonished, for they could not understand how he could have crossed the sea. Only the disciples knew how at midnight Jesus had walked across the stormy water to the boat, and when the people asked Jesus, "Rabbi, how camest thou hither?" he did not tell them.

When they were on the mountain side the day before his heart pitied them because they had no one to teach them, and he talked to them about the things of God. But now, when he looked into their hearts, he saw that they were not thinking or caring for what he had told them; they did not care that he was the Son of God who had come to save them; they were only thinking of the food he gave them to eat. They knew that when Moses led the people through the wilderness the manna which they called bread from heaven came down every day to feed them, and they wanted Jesus to be their king and feed them every day as he had done the day before. They

gathered about Jesus in the synagogue where he was teaching, waiting to see if he would not do some wonderful miracle to please them. Then Jesus preached them a sermon about bread.

He told them there were two kinds of food ; food for the body and food for the soul. The food for the body does not last ; we eat it and it is gone, and very soon we are hungry again. This food helps us to grow and makes us strong, but it cannot keep our bodies from dying. By and by our bodies will be old and worn out or sick, and the food cannot keep them alive. But we ourselves need not die when these houses of ours fall to pieces. There is another kind of food which God will give us if we ask him. It is called living bread and living water, and our souls must be fed with this if we are to live forever with our Lord in heaven. Jesus Christ came down from heaven on purpose to give this living bread to all who want it, and tells us how we may get it. He says, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." That means that if we will just go to Jesus and ask him to take us and forgive our sins and make our hearts new and keep them clean, he will do it, and he will take such blessed care of us, teaching us and doing for us just what we need, that we shall be like little children whom a tender mother takes care of. She knows what they need and she provides food for them, and they never go hungry or thirsty, but have all their wants supplied. So Jesus continually feeds our souls and gives us every day new supplies of grace and love.

Will he do this for everyone? for you and for me and for all? Yes, for he says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." He will take everyone

who comes, and not for any reason will he turn one away.

And those who come to him he will keep. No one is strong enough to take one of them away from him, and he will not lose one of them. Why should not everyone go to him? Once Jesus looked at the people about him and said, sorrowfully, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." He says that now to all who forget him and turn away from him; for he never forgets us or ceases to love us. The people who crowded about him that day in Capernaum have all been dead hundreds of years. But if any of them believed his word and trusted in him they are living with him now, and understand just what he meant when he said, "He that believeth on me shall never die." Some day we shall understand it a great deal better than we can now, but we can go to Jesus and ask him to take us and keep us and feed us day by day with that heavenly bread. Then everything that is pure and beautiful and holy will grow stronger within our hearts, the light of God's Spirit will shine in our eyes, and all who know us will see that we are the children of our Father in heaven.



CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

AMONG the twelve apostles those who best understood the words of Jesus were Peter, James, and John, the three fishermen, who had been drawn together as friends and companions before they became disciples.

This was doubtless the reason why Jesus so often made them his special companions, and why, on the night of the transfiguration, when he went up into the mountain to pray, he took them with him, leaving the rest of his disciples on the plain below.

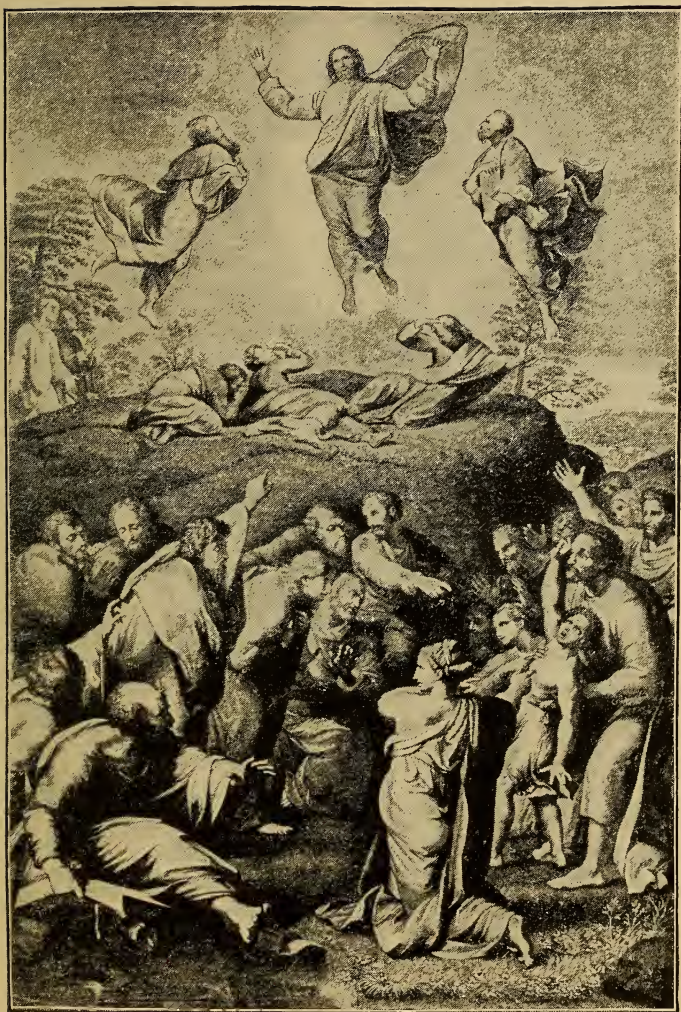
They were all sorrowful and perplexed. Only a few days before Jesus had told them that while he was, as they said, Christ, the Son of God, he was soon to be shamed and scourged and put to death; and the assurance that the third day he should rise again did not comfort them in the least. In all their experience the death of the worker had ended his personal work.

If he really were the Christ, how could he finish his work and yet be rejected and killed? If he were the Son of God, why should he let his enemies triumph over him? If he died, would he not be forever lost to them, as Moses and Elijah and all the other prophets were? No doubt Peter and James and John, more than the others, had been thinking and talking about these strange sayings. They were all weary with the work and travel of the day, and the disciples were heavy with sleep, yet they loved their Master too well to leave him to his loneli-

ness, so they kept watch while he prayed. He looked to them like any common man, with a body like their own, and, as he knelt there, was he not praying, just as they did, for help and strength? Had he not taught them to say "Our Father" just as he did? What did it mean that he was the Christ, the Son of God, and yet was to die by the hands of wicked men?

But suddenly, as they looked, they saw a change come upon their Master. He was no longer a weary man, with a pale, sorrowful face. His countenance brightened and glowed until it shone like the sun, and his garments were white and glistening—whiter than snow, more radiant than anything their eyes had ever seen. They were not heavy with sleep any longer; they were wide awake, and, as they looked in silent awe, two other shining ones stood by their Master. They also were in the form of men, but glorious in appearance, and the disciples in some way knew that these were Moses and Elias. They heard the words they spoke as they talked with Jesus, talking of this same death, which had seemed to them so terrible, as if it was all a part of God's plan; a part of the work for which Jesus came, and not the end of it; the very work for which Moses and Elijah prepared the way.

It is not strange that the disciples were so filled with awe and wonder that they knew not what they said. They saw for the first time their Master looking like the Son of God, and the two greatest prophets come back to earth to help him in his mission. But Moses and Elias seemed to be departing, and Peter, who had been the one to say, "Be it far from thee, Lord," when Jesus talked of his crucifixion, spoke hastily to beg that they might be allowed to build three booths upon the moun-



THE TRANSFIGURATION.

tain, that Jesus and his glorious companions might remain there together.

Even while he was speaking they vanished, and over them all came a cloud of glory overshadowing Jesus and his disciples. Peter forgot his foolish words, for out of the cloud came a solemn voice saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." The disciples fell upon their faces and were sore afraid, until Jesus came and touched them, saying, in his own loving tones, "Arise, and be not afraid."

When they rose the heavenly vision had vanished; there was only Jesus with them; no longer in shining garments and glorious to look upon, but a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Instead of staying on the mountain with Moses and Elias he led them down to where the multitude was waiting to be taught and the poor father to have his lunatic son healed.

Peter and James and John kept in their own hearts what they had seen, and though they did not wholly understand it then they did after a time, when the things of which Moses and Elias had talked came to pass. Their eyes had seen these prophets, dead for hundreds of years; they had heard them talk of what was now going on and about to be done on earth, and they could better realize that Jesus also, though withdrawn from sight into the heavens, still lived, caring for his people, conscious of their needs, and working with them. They had received—

1. Proof of intelligent, active, personal existence after death.

2. Testimony to the unbroken chain of God's providence and control in this world.

3. Confirmation of the divinity and authority of Jesus Christ.

4. Illustration that immortality may be veiled by mortality, and of the glory that shall be revealed by its unveiling.



CHAPTER XXVI.

JESUS AND THE LITTLE MAID.

OUR Lord Jesus did so many wonderful things in the few years which he lived upon earth that if they had all been written down we should have a great number of books filled with the story instead of only one. Each of the four disciples, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, wrote down the things that he remembered best. Sometimes, when they told of the same thing, Luke would put in something that John left out ; but it helps us to understand the story better if we read it the way each one has told it.

One of the most touching events in Jesus's life is the raising from the dead of a little girl. She was about twelve years old, and her father was named Jairus. He was one of the rulers of the synagogue, so they probably lived at Capernaum.

The little girl was so sick that there was no hope of her getting well, and Jesus had been away across the lake, and had but just returned. Perhaps when they were all weeping at the ruler's house, and waiting for the child to die, some one came running in and said to the father, " Did you know that Jesus is in the city ? He came back yesterday, and Matthew, the publican, has made him a feast. They are at dinner now."

The father hastened away to the house, and, kneeling at Jesus's feet, said :

" My little daughter lieth at the point of death : I pray thee, come lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

Jesus had pity on the distressed father, and started to go with him at once, but the people thronged about him on the street so that he could only move very slowly. There were many who wanted help, and kept calling out to him and crowding about him. There was one poor sick woman who had not courage enough to cry out, but who still wanted to be helped. She had been sick for twelve years, and she had spent all her money upon physicians who tried to cure her, but instead of getting better she grew worse. She had heard of Jesus, and she said, "I will not trouble him ; I will only touch his garment with my finger. If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole." So she pressed through the crowd and came behind him and touched the hem of his garment. Instantly she felt in her body that she was cured. But Jesus felt the touch of her finger just as the mother hears amid all other noises the voice of her own little child calling out to her. The touch meant, "Help me," and Jesus turned about and smiled upon her and said, "Daughter, be of good cheer ; thy faith hath made thee whole."

All this time Jairus was thinking only of his own little daughter, and wondering if she were still alive. Just as Jesus spoke to the woman there came a messenger from the ruler's house, saying, "Thy daughter is dead ; trouble not the Master ;" but Jesus said to him, "Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole." So they went on together to the house, and there they found the friends weeping, crying aloud, and the hired minstrels singing doleful songs, as they do in that country when anyone dies. They thought Jesus had come too late, and when he said to them, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," they laughed at him. They knew she was dead,

but they did not understand that death is only a sleep from which the voice of God can awaken his children. Then Jesus sent them all out except the father and mother and his three disciples, Peter, James, and John. He took the little girl by the hand and said, "Maid, arise!" Then her spirit came back again into her body, and she arose from her bed and walked, and Jesus bade them give her some food, for they were so much astonished they did not know what to do. They could only think of telling everyone the wonderful story, but Jesus bade them not to tell it. He could not raise every dead person to life, or heal every sick one; that was not the work for which he came to earth, and the more people heard of his miracles the more they crowded about him and hindered him from his teaching.

Such news could not be kept. When he came out he found two blind men waiting, who followed him crying for help. When he reached the house where he was staying, the blind men came to him. Jesus said, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They said unto him, "Yea, Lord." Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith be it unto you." They really had faith, for their eyes were opened, and they went away praising the power of the man who had healed them.

There is one thing which was said of all these people who came to Jesus for help, and that is, *they had faith*; they believed Jesus *could* help them, and they trusted him to do it. The way for anyone to get help from God is to feel you *need* help, to believe God *can give* you help, and to trust that he *will give* it. Whether we ask for the forgiveness of our sins or for anything else this is the way to go to our Father. This is the kind of asking of which Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

JESUS often taught by means of stories. Sometimes the lesson was in the story itself, like a picture in a beautiful frame, and sometimes the story was only to explain the lesson and make it clearer, like a lamp held up to throw light on a picture. But though the stories were told for men, and some of them for very wise men, they are all so sweet and simple that a child can understand them, and no one ever wearies of them. Some things that pleased us very much when we were children seem foolish to us when we grow older; but it is not so with the stories Jesus told. The older we grow, and the more we study them, the more they impress us. In our lesson to-day we have one of these wonderful stories by which Jesus sought to teach us what kind of love should be in our hearts and govern our actions toward others.

He seems to have been sitting and talking with his disciples, while others were listening to his words, and presently one of the listeners stood up to ask him a question. This man was called a lawyer, because his business was to study the law and teach it. He thought he was asking Jesus a hard question when he said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It was a very solemn question; Jesus himself had said that it was of no value to a man to gain the whole world and fail to win eternal life. But the lawyer did not ask because he was anxious to know what he must do, but to hear what

Jesus would say. He may have expected him to say, "Come, and be my disciple," or, "Listen to my teachings and you will know;" but Jesus did not tell him any new way. He sent him to the very book he had all his life been studying, and whose teachings he professed to understand so perfectly—the book of the law.

Jesus said, "What is written in the law?" When Satan tried to tempt our Lord he answered him in the same way, by the words that were written in the law. When the lawyer said, "What must I do?" he meant, "How must I live?" and now he answered Jesus by repeating these words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

Jesus did not add a word to this law; he only said, "That is right; if you do this you shall have eternal life;" and then he stopped.

The lawyer thought about it. To love God with all the heart and soul and strength and mind meant to delight in him and in his service; to do his will diligently, earnestly, intelligently; he knew he had not that kind of love. And then to love his neighbor as himself; he loved some people, he was willing to serve and help his friends when he could do it without too much trouble, but he had always taught that our neighbors were only our own countrymen, and that we might love some people and hate others; so he asked another question, "And who is my neighbor?"

Again Jesus did not answer directly, but told a beautiful story of a traveler on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, the city where the priests and Levites lived. It was a dangerous road, for bands of robbers lived in the

caves and mountains, and some of them attacked this traveler, stripped him of even his clothes, and left him lying there wounded and half dead. After a time another traveler came by. He was a priest, and was considered a very good and holy man, but he only looked at the poor man and went on his way. Perhaps he thought it would be too much trouble to attend to him, or was afraid the robbers might attack him also, or he said, "I am in a great hurry to get home, and somebody else will probably help him;" at least he went on and did nothing. Presently came another traveler; he was a good man too, but he had some excuse for not helping the wounded man, and he went on. But before the poor man was quite dead a Samaritan came riding by. The Jews despised the Samaritans, and thought them no better than heathen, but this one showed that he had true brotherly love that was ready to help any who were in need. He bound up the man's wounds, cleansing and dressing them with the oil and wine which travelers carried on journeys. Then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and stayed to take care of him until morning. The next day, before he went away on his own business, he gave the landlord of the inn some money, saying, "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more I, when I come back, will repay thee."

When Jesus finished the story he asked the lawyer which of these three men he thought was neighbor to the man who fell among thieves. The lawyer answered, "He that showed mercy on him," and Jesus said to him, "Go, and do thou likewise."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TWELVE MESSENGERS.

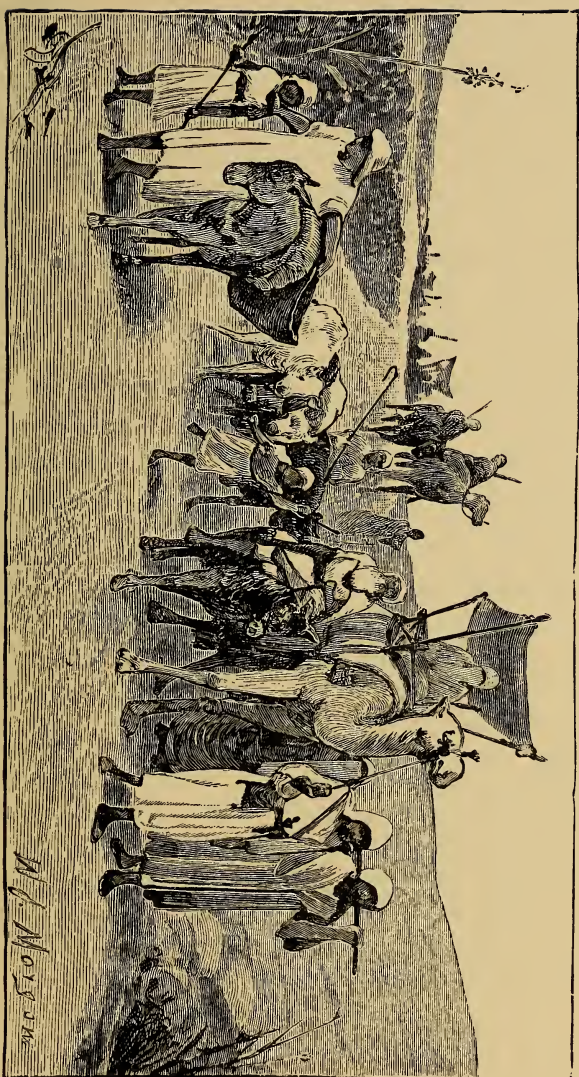
AFTER the twelve disciples had been with Jesus some time, had seen him work many miracles, and been taught by him about the kingdom of God and the way to have a part in it, he sent them out to begin their work of carrying the good news to others. He did not send them away to stay very long, but only for a short journey; and though they went in different directions, he did not send anyone alone, but always two together, so they could help and encourage each other. He called them to him and told them just what they were to do. He told them they need not take any money with them or even any bread to eat by the way, for God would take care of them, and they must learn to trust him. They must not take anything to burden or hinder them; no clothes except what they wore, not even an extra coat, as travelers usually did, but put their sandals on their feet, and take a staff in their hand, and go on their way, preaching as they went, and saying to everybody, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Whenever they came to a city they were to go into some house where the people were willing to receive them in God's name, and there they were to stay all the time they were in that city. They must not go about visiting their friends or to feasts and suppers, but remember they had been sent on important business, and must give all their attention to that. If anyone re-

fused to receive them or to listen to them they were not to be troubled or discouraged, but just go on to another city. There were many people who would not receive Jesus himself. You remember the people over beyond Galilee besought him to go away from them, and even in his own city, Nazareth, they would not believe on him. They said, "Why, this man is just a carpenter; we know his mother and his brothers and sisters. How can he have such great power or be so much wiser than we?" And Jesus knew that many people would not receive his messengers, but he said that those who had a chance to hear and refused would surely be punished, and that when they came before God in judgment they would be counted much worse than the heathen nations who knew very little about God and had never heard of his Son, Jesus Christ.

If we had been in Nazareth we might have seen them setting out, two and two. Andrew and Peter would be sure to go together, and perhaps they would take the road toward Tiberias. And presently they would meet some merchantmen on their way from Tyre, and would stop to talk with them, or they would find a traveler sitting to rest under a palm tree, or a shepherd drawing water for his flock by some well, or a company of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem. For everybody they had the same message; they "preached that men should repent," and they healed the sick and cast out evil spirits in the name of Jesus by the power which he had given them. It was just as Jesus had said, some received them and some would not; some listened and some turned away; and when they had finished their work they went back and told Jesus all about it.

These were the first messengers Jesus sent out, but



TRAVELERS ON AN EASTERN HIGHWAY.

ever since he has been sending them, until thousands and thousands of voices are telling the good news of his kingdom and preaching that men should repent. In some countries, like India and China, where missionaries are sent, they still go out very much as Andrew and Peter went, talking to the people wherever they find them, along the road, or by the riverside, or at work in the fields; and when they come to the little villages they go in wherever the people will receive them, and sit down and teach.

But one of the very last messages which our Lord sent us in the Bible is, "Let him that heareth say, Come; and whosoever will, let him come," so that everybody who knows about Jesus—men, women, and children, you and I just as much as anyone—are bidden to go and tell others. And just as Andrew and Peter preached as they went, so we can tell the story wherever we are, and while we are about our daily work. Jesus sends brothers and sisters out by twos and threes and in little companies as his messengers. They need not be old or strong or wise to carry his message. The disciples had no power of their own, but Jesus gave them power, power to heal diseases, power to cast out evil spirits in his name. So even a child may show people how they may be healed of the disease of sin, and how evil spirits may be cast out of their hearts, and have no more power over them, in the name of Jesus. And a child can help to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and comfort those in trouble, and care for the sick, and do such works of mercy and love as Jesus himself did.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SEVENTY MESSENGERS.

THE twelve disciples whose names we know were not the only messengers whom Jesus sent out to preach. He once chose seventy men from among his followers, gave them the same power to heal diseases and cast out evil spirits that he had given to the twelve, and sent them before him to go by two and two into all the cities where he himself was coming, that they might prepare the people to receive him and listen to his words.

Their business was to prepare the way for Jesus, and to this same work he has sent all who truly love him in every nation and under all circumstances. Every servant of his is called to be his messenger to prepare his way; so we need to study carefully the directions he gave these seventy early messengers that we may know how he would have us work so that we may succeed.

1. Our work is needed because there is a great deal to do and very few people to do it. Jesus said to these seventy messengers that the world was like a great harvest field where the grain was ripe and ready to be gathered, but only a few laborers to attend to it. It is God's harvest, it is very precious; if it is not gathered for him much of it will be wasted or stolen by the enemy; but if each one would do his part the very youngest might perhaps save a few precious grains from loss; and Jesus said the angels were glad when even *one* was saved.

2. Jesus bade the seventy go, but he told them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to give them such an eager desire to work that it would push them out to help, as the steam drives the engine along the track. There must be something in the heart that loves to work and longs to work and will work, and for this they were to pray.

3. Put God's work first. These seventy messengers were sent out on special business, and they were to do nothing else until it was accomplished. They were to do it as quickly as they could, and so they were not to allow themselves to be hindered by going from one house to another or stopping by the way for the long salutations which took so much time. As if a father should say to his son, "I wish you to go and do this errand for me and come directly back; do not stop a minute to speak to any of your friends." That would be a special command for a special errand. But always the son should make it his first care to obey and please his father, and he may be thinking of his wishes while he is working or studying or playing. So God's work should have the first place in our hearts, and we should not allow anything, however right or harmless or pleasant to interfere with it.

4. Trust God and have no anxious care. Jesus bade his messengers not to burden and hinder themselves by carrying extra clothing or stopping to provide food or money for the journey, but trust in the provision he would make day by day for their needs. This was another special direction for a special journey, but it is always true that God's workers need have no anxious care for food or clothing or necessary things. They are bidden to be diligent in business while they are fervent

in spirit, serving the Lord, and then they are assured that all their needs will be supplied.

These messengers were to help men's bodies by healing their diseases and casting out the evil demons that vexed them, as well as to tell of Jesus and say that he was coming. So to-day it is a part of God's work to feed the hungry, nurse the sick, and in every way help the suffering, and so prepare the way for the kingdom of love and good will and holiness.

If a father sends a message to his son by a servant and the son does not regard it he is dishonoring the father. So Jesus said to the seventy, as he says to all his messengers, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me."

To reject a messenger is not to treat him rudely or refuse to listen to him, but to pay no attention to the command or the advice or the request he brings us. We hear Christ in his messengers when we listen and open our hearts to receive him, for wherever he sends his messengers there he is ready to come himself. We reject him when we listen to prayer or Scripture or hymn, or even to birds and winds and the story of stars and flowers, yet shut our hearts to his entering in, as some of these cities of Galilee might have closed their gates at his coming.

After all, it was of no avail to those cities if even Jesus came to them if they did not hear his sayings and do them. Jesus said those cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, like Capernaum and Bethsaida, and which yet did not repent and believe, were much worse than the wicked city of Sodom that never heard such wonderful words.

Every message from God, every blessing he sends us,

makes us either better or worse. A child who does not obey when the parent speaks once is disobedient ; but a child who still does not obey when the parent speaks again and again, and pleads and entreats, surely grows harder and more rebellious and must receive severer punishment.



CHAPTER XXX.

OPENING BLIND EYES.

ABOUT the time that our Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem another little baby was born in the city of Jerusalem near by. This baby's father and mother were poor people, but they were glad when their little boy was born. They loved him and took the best care of him they could, and watched, as fathers and mothers do, to see when the baby would begin to notice them and smile back at them. Perhaps this was their first little baby, and if he was they took him, when he was a few weeks old, and carried him up to the temple to present him to God. They said, "This is God's little child; we will try to teach him and train him so that he may grow up to be good."

But as the baby grew older they began to see that something was wrong with his eyes. He did not seem to mind the bright sunshine or to notice the gayest flowers, and by and by they had to make up their minds that their dear little baby was blind. The neighbors heard of it, and they were sorry for the father and mother, and for the baby too; but no one could help them. The Jews thought that God let children be born blind to punish their parents for some dreadful sin, and they felt sure that the father and mother must have done something very displeasing to God. They even thought that the baby's soul might have lived at some time in another body and done some very wicked thing, and

so God had sent him back again to live in a blind body for a punishment.

The little blind baby grew older and by and by grew up to be a man, but in those days the blind were never taught to do anything, so he could not work to help his father and mother or take care of himself. The only thing he could do was to go and sit by the gate of the temple and beg of every one that passed by. Year after year he sat there begging, until he was more than thirty years old. Then, on a Sabbath day, the Lord Jesus passed by with his disciples, and they stopped to look at him, with his blind eyes and his poor ragged garments and his hand held out for money. They talked a little about the blind man, and Jesus told his disciples they must not think that God made him blind just to punish him, but rather he had allowed him to be born in that way so that he might show his love and power in helping him. How eagerly the poor blind man listened! Never in all his life had he heard kind words like these, and this man who spoke them said also, "I am the light of the world." Could it be possible that some great prophet had come who could give light to blind eyes?

While he was listening and waiting Jesus spat on the ground and made a little moist clay, and touched the man's blind eyes with it, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The blind man obeyed at once, and, though the clay and the water could not give him sight, the power of Jesus Christ opened his eyes and he could see. How wonderful the world must have looked to him when he saw it all for the first time!

And where do you think he would go first? Home, I think, to see his father and mother, whose faces he had never seen, and tell them how wonderfully his sight had



JESUS HEALING A BLIND MAN.

been given to him. The news spread quickly among the neighbors, and they came to see him and asked, "Is this really the man who sat and begged?" Some said, "Yes, this is he;" others said, "He looks like him, but we are not quite sure." But the man himself said, "I am he. A man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash; and I went and washed, and came seeing."

The neighbors did not know what to think of such a strange story, so they took the man to the Pharisees and he told it to them. At first they pretended not to believe it, but when they sent for the father and mother and asked them, "Is this really your son? Was he really born blind?" the father and mother said, "This is really our son, and he was born blind; we are sure of that, but we cannot tell who has opened his eyes; you must ask him; he is old enough to speak for himself." Then they asked the man to tell them again just what Jesus did, and how he opened his eyes. The man said, "I have told you already, and you did not believe me. Do you wish to be his disciples? You say this Jesus is a sinner, but how does it happen that God should hear a sinner and give him power to do such wonderful things? Since the world began it was never heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If Jesus were not of God he could do nothing."

The Pharisees could not answer the man, but they were very angry to think he should try to teach them, and they turned him out of the synagogue and said no one should have anything to do with him. I do not think the man cared. He was not rich or wise, but he knew that he had been blind and now he could see, and

he was ready to love and serve the one who had given him such blessed help. And so one day when Jesus came to him and said, "I am not only God's prophet, but I am the Son of God," the poor man believed at once, and worshiped him.

Should not you like to know what became of this man? Jesus and his disciples went away presently into the wilderness beyond Jordan, and it is very likely he went with them, and heard the words that Jesus spoke to the people and to his disciples as he sat alone with them, but nothing could ever have sounded so sweet to him as the words he first heard when he was listening in darkness, "I am the light of the world." The blind man needed light for his body and light for his soul, and Jesus gave him both, but the best light was that which shone upon his soul when he said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe." He had no friends, but Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; my sheep shall never perish." He was not very wise, but Jesus said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." He had no home, but Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock; in my Father's house are many mansions." The Pharisees might even wish to kill him, but Jesus said, "Fear not them that kill the body;" so, always, whatever happened, he was safe.



CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TRUE VINE.

LAST June I saw a pretty summer house on a lawn that had been decorated for a birthday party. It was covered all over with evergreen boughs and wild grapevines. The grapevines were in full blossom, and they were sweeter than any roses. But the next day all the vines were withered, and the gardener pulled them down and carried them away and burned them. If they had been left in the woods where they grew the blossoms would have changed into fruit and the fruit would have ripened; but branches that are cut off from the vine cannot grow; they must die, because they need the vine to feed them. And just as the branch cannot bear fruit unless it grows upon the vine, so God's children cannot go on living and growing and bearing fruit for him if they go away from him. Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Even little children can understand what that means. They know how the vine draws up from the earth the food that feeds every branch and makes the fruit grow and ripen. They know what becomes of branches that are broken off—how quickly they wither and dry up. But what shall we do that we may "abide in Christ?" We must not think we can bear fruit of ourselves. No matter how good people seem to be, or how hard they

try to do right and please God, they cannot go on growing in love and wisdom and getting stronger as they get older unless they have help from the Friend who lived and died to help them. He must take us to be his own, so that, just as the sap from the vine flows through the branches, the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ flows through our souls and makes his life our life.

Sometimes a branch is broken a little by a storm, or because someone bends it carelessly, and then it is broken a little more, until by and by it falls quite down and withers. So sometimes sin and forgetfulness and disobedience begin to separate some branch from God's vine and break it further and further, until, instead of growing, it dies. When you forget to keep holy the Sabbath day, when you say what is not quite true, when you give way to selfishness, when you do not from your heart desire to please God, you are not growing fast to the vine; by and by you may be separated further; some day you may be cut off.

God can keep us growing, and he will. He wants us to bear fruit, that is, to grow better and better every day and help to make others better. He has given us a book filled with beautiful words to teach us how to live to please him; and Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." Then we have only to keep close to Jesus every day, to have his words always in our hearts, and then whatever we need will be given to us.

A great many things have to be done to the branches of a vine if we wish to have the very best fruit. It has to be tied up, and sometimes a part of it cut off. And so Jesus tells us that our wise Father, who cares for every little branch, tends and trains and trims them, so

that they may bear more fruit, and grow just in the way he wishes to have them. When sickness comes, when we are disappointed in our plans, when God does not let us have what we want, we must remember about the gardener's work, and be sure that our Father knows best how to train us so that we may bear much fruit. The branches of God's vine bear many kinds of fruit, and patience and gentleness in pain are beautiful fruit in his sight.

How may we know that we abide in Christ? Because we keep his commandments; because we love him; because we love one another. To abide means to stay always; to continue means to go on. So Jesus says, "Abide in me—stay with me always; continue ye in my love—go on loving me and keeping my commandments, and most of all this new commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you."



CHAPTER XXXII.

CONFESSING CHRIST.

WHEN two armies go out to fight each army has its own uniform and its own banner, and the soldiers let everyone know to which side they belong and who is their leader. So the soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, if they really belong to him, must own their leader everywhere and have his name on their banners.

It was not always an easy thing to say, "I belong to the Lord Jesus," in the days when the disciples were first sent out to teach and to preach. The scribes and the Pharisees hated him, and those who followed him were despised and persecuted; they were turned out of the synagogues and out of their homes, and sometimes put to death, as Stephen was, and a great many others. Jesus told them this would be so, but he told them if they really loved him they would be willing to serve and follow him. He told of three things which his disciples must do:

1. Own him before men. To confess Christ, or to own him for our Master before men, means a great deal more than just to *say* we belong to him. It means to try *first* to find out just what he wants us to do. We can learn this from the Bible, where he has told how those must live who are the children of God. He says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" "Be kindly affectioned one toward another;" "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;"

“Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;” “Let brotherly love continue;” “Children, obey your parents in the Lord;” “Pray without ceasing;” and “In everything give thanks.”

These are only a very few of the things that are written to tell us how we may be the children of God, but when we have learned them the next thing is to do them. Jesus said, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” So the *second* thing is to live exactly as he would have us live. Sometimes we think this is easy, but no one can do it without the help of the Holy Spirit to keep us from evil and draw our hearts to the right, to teach us when we do not know how to choose and bring us back to our Father when we go wrong. And then to own Christ before men means also to try to lead others to serve him by living right and so setting them a good example by telling them of Jesus, by sending books and teachers and help to those who have less than we, and so following in the steps of the One who went about doing good. Jesus told his disciples that they must not only own him before men, but

2. They must be ready to serve him in hard things. It is not sure that everyone will have very hard things to do, but we must love Jesus Christ enough to be willing to do whatever he asks of us. That is what he means by taking up your cross and following him: to give him all your heart's love and let him choose for you in everything. People in heathen lands often bear very cruel sufferings and do very hard things because they wish to please their idol gods. Ought not we, who have a loving and wise Father who cares only for our good, to trust him so that we shall be ready to give up everything if he bids us?

3. They must be ready to serve him in little things. Sometimes people who think they could do very hard things for Christ forget to do little things. Sometimes children who say they love their parents very much forget the little helpful things they might do to save them from weariness; and so some of us who think we should like to go as missionaries and tell the heathen about Jesus do not remember to speak a kind word or do a kind act to those about us. Was it not good of Jesus to put into his word the assurance that even the least of the little things were seen and noticed by him? For when he tells us what we should do for him he does not forget to tell us what he will do for us; and so with the three commands we have three promises:

1. If we own him before men he will own us before our Father in heaven. He will not be ashamed to call us his, to prepare a place for us and welcome us.

2. He will help us in hard places. Where we go he will go before us; he will ever be our comfort and guide.

3. He will remember and reward the smallest service. Even so little a gift as a cup of cold water given for his sake to the poorest of his children, or any kind deed to those who try to serve him, will be sure of a precious reward. What service have you rendered in the name of Jesus? What service can you do in his name? Can everyone tell by your life that you belong to his army?



CHAPTER XXXIII.

LOST AND FOUND.

WE have some beautiful tokens of our Father's love and care for those who obeyed and trusted him, who had no anxious thought about the things of this life but committed all their ways to God, and made it their chief business to do his will.

But this would be a very dark, hopeless world if God only loved those who love him. It was love that first found a way to take us out of sin and bring us to the Father, who always loved us; a love so free and strong and wonderful that it is not strange men should find it hard to understand or believe it. All his life our Lord Jesus tried to teach men that love and mercy did not come to us because of our goodness, but that love came first and made goodness possible. His teaching was full of these two thoughts: that God loves sinners and works ceaselessly for their salvation, and that he expects all his children to love and work for the same end.

The parables in this passage (Luke xv) were spoken to the Pharisees, who complained of Jesus because he welcomed sinners, taught them, and showed himself their friend. They are all about lost things; and just as he had tried to make us understand how surely God will answer our prayers by bidding us think how gladly we give our children the things they ask of us, so now he bade the Pharisees remember how men seek for lost things and rejoice at finding them, that they might know how



JESUS AMONG HIS DISCIPLES.

God feels about the lost ones that are far more precious.

The first parable was of the lost sheep. Out on those valleys and mountains where the shepherds led their flocks it was very easy for them to stray away and be lost, but the shepherd knew each sheep by name, and if from ever so large a flock one were lost the shepherd would leave all the rest and search for it until he found it. Then he would take the poor tired thing in his arms and carry it home rejoicing, and call his friends to rejoice with him.

That is the way our Father feels toward his lost children. Everyone is precious to him; he is not willing that one should be lost. They are foolish and helpless and in great danger; they cannot find their own way back; they have no strength to come back. But our Father does not leave them to themselves; he goes after them, he calls them, he never leaves them till he finds them, and then he takes them in his own strong arms and carries them home. He is glad because he has found them; he rejoices over them, and all the angels rejoice with him.

The second lost thing was a piece of silver, a coin such as the women of that country wear strung on a chain about the forehead. Every married woman must have ten of these pieces, and if one is lost it is considered a great disgrace and a sign of some dreadful misfortune. If one were lost the owner would light a candle and search and sweep in her dark little house and never rest until she found it. Then she too would call her friends and neighbors and bid them rejoice with her because she had found her piece which was lost. She would cleanse it from the dust, put it back in its place

with the others, and go about singing, "I have found it! I have found it!"

Will our Father take less pains to find the precious soul that has fallen into the darkness and foulness of sin? He will find his child, no matter where he hides himself; he will make the darkness light about him, no matter how black it is; he will cleanse him, no matter how foul he is; he will rejoice over him as he sets him in his place as a beloved child, and all in heaven and on earth who have the spirit of God will rejoice also.

This wonderful love means a great deal to us. Without it we never could find our way back to God; without it we never could hope to bring anyone else back. The message which Jesus brought us was, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and with this message he bids us go to everybody.

We love him because he first loved us; because while we were yet sinners Christ died, and the best way to waken this love in others is just to tell the story of his patient, unfailing, forgiving love, that seeks and calls and entreats and delights to take the wanderer back. Jesus bade us show by love and mercy that we were the children of our Father; and Paul said, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."



CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LOST SON.

THE third parable that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees was so beautiful and so touching that we never tire of hearing it. The story of the lost sheep has been sung all over the world in the song of "The Ninety and Nine," and this story of the lost son has been put into wonderful paintings by great artists. But we do not need the paintings. When we read the sweet, simple story we can see it all as plainly as if it were being acted before our eyes.

We usually call it the parable of the Prodigal Son. Prodigal means wasteful, and as we go on we shall see what precious things this young man wasted. We shall learn something more than we were told in the story of the lost sheep, and that is, how we came to be lost and what we ourselves must do to return to our Father's house. For we are not exactly like the sheep or the piece of silver; we are like the prodigal son; we are lost because we ourselves choose to go away from our Father's care.

I. Waste. This son had a good home and a kind father, but he did not wish to be guided and directed; he wanted to be independent; he asked his father to give him his part of the property, and when he got it he took it and went a long way off—to a far country. He may not have intended to live a wicked life; he only wanted to do as he pleased and have a good time;

but he lived idly, he got into bad company, he grew worse and worse, until by and by his money was all gone. He had wasted his substance; not only his money, but far more precious riches: first, *his father's love*; that he had set aside as if it were of no value, forgetting the father that never forgot him while he gave himself to evil companions; then his *time*, that might have been spent to some good purpose; his *health*, for a life of rioting ruins the body as well as the soul; his *character*, for a companion of vile men and women grows like his friends and associates; his *property*, for instead of earning he was only scattering. All these were wasted; and after they were gone there was nothing to show for them. We cannot go away from God's presence as the young man did from his father's; everywhere his eye follows us, his presence is with us; but when we turn from the things he loves and love the things he hates, when we reject his counsel and choose our own ways, we are separated in spirit from him, we are in a far country and wasting our substance.

2. Want. After waste came want. The foolish son had spent all he had—money, time, love, character, health; he was in want of everything, but nobody offered to help him. He had not fitted himself for any honorable place; he was just a poor, ragged fellow, who was glad to get the only work he was fit for—feeding swine. He was so wretched and hungry that he would have willingly eaten such food as the swine had, yet nobody pitied or offered him anything better. He had lost some things that no man could give back to him. No one can give us back the time and strength wasted in wrongdoing, the character ruined by evil ways, the substance that God meant us to spend in his service

and under his directions. The father gave his son what might have made him rich and useful and happy, and he only got from it *ruin*.

3. Regret—Resolve—Return. Hunger and misery made the young man stop and think. He came to himself. He saw his folly. He said, "I have ruined myself, and there is no help for me here. I am perishing with hunger while there is food enough in my father's house for even the hired servants." He said, "I will arise and go to my father; I will confess my sin and my shame, and ask him only to save me from perishing." And then, without any delay, he went to his father.

4. Welcome—Pardon—Love. The father had never ceased to love him and to long and watch for his return. He saw him a great way off; his heart pitied him, he ran to meet him, he kissed and embraced him before he could say, "I have sinned;" and though the son said, "I am not worthy to be called a son," he called the servants to put beautiful garments on him, and made a feast of rejoicing over him, saying, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

So always, with unchanging love our Father's heart goes after those who separate themselves from him, watching for their return and ready to welcome them with love and pardon whenever they come back saying, "I have sinned." In just such royal fashion he clothes us anew and rejoices over us, letting all the past go, and giving us not only bread but honor.

But I think the prodigal must always have been poorer because of the wasted years and the wasted substance, and have wished he had "come to himself" a great deal sooner. And I am sure it is more blessed

that a child should say to his heavenly Father, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth; let me not depart from thee," than to go away into the far country and come back beggared of what might have been real treasure.



CHAPTER XXXV.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

PEOPLE came bringing young children to Jesus that he might touch them, and the disciples, instead of making way for them all to come, and smiling at the mothers and the babies in their arms, were displeased about it, and rebuked those who brought them. They wanted them to go away and not trouble Jesus; but they did not understand how full of love his heart was, and when Jesus saw what they were doing he was much displeased. He turned to them and spoke those blessed words that will never be forgotten: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

He told his disciples, as he had told them before, that the only way to enter into God's kingdom was to become like a little child, loving and trustful and obedient, and then he stretched out his hands in welcome to the little ones. "He took them up in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them."

A precious invitation. It was a good thing for the old and the sick and the lame to come to Jesus and be made well, and go away and tell others about him. It was a good thing for the poor man who had been possessed by a whole legion of devils to come to Jesus and have them cast out, and go away to tell his friends what great things the Lord had done for him. It was a good thing for the man who had been palsied for many years

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN.
"Suffer the little children to come unto me."



to have Jesus heal him and say to him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" and for the man who was born blind to have his eyes opened and hear Jesus saying, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee." But would it not have been better not to have gone on sinning and suffering for years until they had only a little while left in which to be happy in God's service? Would it not have been better if, when they were little children, they had been brought to Jesus and received his blessing to go with them all the way and keep them from evil? That is what those blessed children had whom Jesus took in his arms, and what every child on earth to-day may have if he will only go and ask it.

Why did Jesus say of little children, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven?" Not because they are wise or strong or holy, but because these children rested in their mothers' arms, trusting them to take care of them, and never doubted the mother's love and wisdom, just as God's children must trust his love and strength and wisdom.

It is not what we can *do* that makes us pleasing to God, but what we *are*.

Very soon after Jesus had spoken these words a young man came running to meet him who thought he could belong to God and earn a place in his kingdom just by *doing good deeds*. He had been well taught; he knew the commandments, and he told Jesus he had always been careful to keep them since he was a boy; he thought he was about right, but he did not feel quite sure, and so he asked Jesus if there was anything more which he ought to do to be certain of having a part in God's kingdom by and by. He was very much in earnest, and was quite honest in what he asked, so that Mark tells us that

Jesus loved him when he looked at him. But Jesus could see that there was something wrong in his heart. He was not like a little child, ready to obey without question. He did not love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, for when Jesus said, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me," the young man was not ready to do it. He had great possessions, and he wanted to keep them and have treasure in heaven also, so he went away sorrowful.

It was not wrong to have great possessions, but it was wrong to care more for them than for treasure in heaven. Jesus did not promise to make everything easy and pleasant for him; he said, "Take up the cross, and follow me," and he had said before that no one could be his disciple unless he was willing to give up and to suffer, if it was necessary, for others.

So, when Jesus says to the children, "Come unto me," and holds out his arms to receive and bless them, he means that when they come they should leave behind them everything that hinders them from thinking most of his wishes and obeying instantly his voice. And as they grow older he wants them to keep on being like little children in love and trust and obedience, for only in that way can they truly belong to the kingdom of heaven.

Are you not glad that it was Jesus himself who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me?" for when Jesus says "Come" it is like an invitation from the king himself, and nobody can forbid you. Only one person can keep you away, and that is *yoursel*f, if, when Jesus says "Come," you do not say, "Here am I."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

DID you ever think how many disciples Jesus would have had if all who heard his words had received and obeyed them? Wherever he went there were always multitudes about him. They crowded into the house so that there was no room even about the door; they thronged about him as he walked the streets and gave him no time so much as to eat; they "pressed upon him to hear the word of God" until he had to go into a little ship to find a place where he might speak to them. Four thousand of them had been listening for three days when he fed them with the few loaves and fishes, and again five thousand had followed on foot into the desert place where he fed them because he had compassion on them. "Great multitudes," the Bible says, followed him from Galilee into Judea; "great multitudes" were with him when he opened the eyes of the blind at Jericho; when he raised the widow's son at Nain; when he spake the parable of the wedding guest; when he cried, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and "an innumerable multitude that trode one upon another" gathered about him when he talked about the folly of laying up treasures on earth and not being rich toward God.

It was not a careless, scoffing multitude; we are told that they "took him for a prophet;" "fear fell upon them;" they "wondered and glorified God;" they "re-

joiced for all the glorious things that were done by him ;” they “were very attentive to hear him ;” they said, ‘This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world ;’ and yet when Jesus looked at them he said, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I command you ?”

It was of no use to listen, of no use to say, “These are beautiful words ; this is a great teacher sent from God,” unless the words, like good seed, took root in the heart where they fell and brought forth fruit in the life. Every word that Jesus spoke was like good seed, and it fell into many hearts. Why did it not grow ?

Jesus explained this to his disciples.

He said it was just as it was when a man went out to sow grain. Some of the seed would fall on the hard soil of the little paths that in that country ran through the fields, and the birds would pick it up ; some would fall upon thin stony soil, and though it sprang up quickly the roots could not go down deep enough to feed it, and so it



“SOME SEEDS FELL BY THE WAYSIDE,
AND THE BIRDS CAME AND DE-
VOURED THEM.”

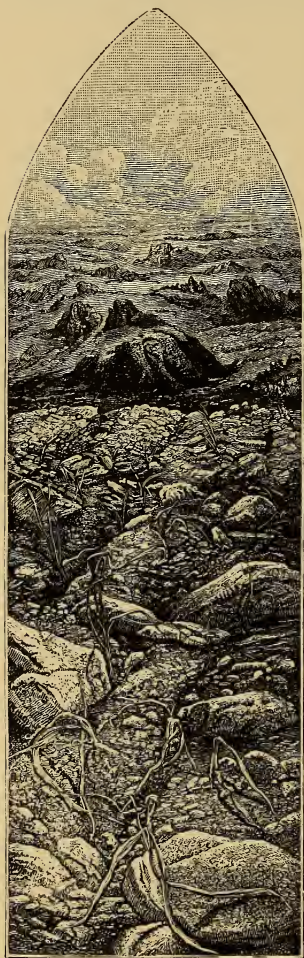
withered away ; some would fall where thorns and weeds

had already filled the soil, and as they grew strong and tall they choked the wheat and killed it.

So when Jesus, or his servants who work for him, sow in men's hearts the good seed of God's word, it does not grow unless the soil has been prepared for it.

1. Some of those who hear do not even listen. The word is like the seed on the pathway, it does not get into their hearts at all. Satan keeps them busy with other thoughts, of work or business or amusement, or he sets them to thinking unkindly of others or criticising the one who brings God's message, until by and by, just as the path through the fields is continually trodden harder, their hearts grow harder, and nothing good can find root there.

2. Some who hear do listen. They think it would be pleasant to be good, to be called God's children, to be at peace with him, and they say just as the Children of Israel sometimes



"SOME FELL IN STONY PLACES, AND BECAUSE THEY HAD NO ROOT THEY WITHERED AWAY."

did, "All that the Lord commands we will do." But it is what we *are* and not what we *do* that makes us God's children, and the good seed must send its roots down deep and find something to feed upon, or it cannot long grow. Goodness that is not fed by love and obedience is like a beautiful flower stuck in the ground without any root, that withers as soon as the sun shines hot upon it and is easily pulled up.

3. Some who listen understand and mean to obey, but they do not put God's service first and make it their business to see that nothing in them or about them shall hinder their growth. They are full of care for other things, and instead of being fruitful Christians they are like the poor, feeble, half-starved grains of wheat that managed to live after a fashion among the thorns, but ripened no rich, golden ears for the harvest. Thus, as Christ explains, "he also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the



"AND SOME FELL AMONG THORNS;
AND THE THORNS SPRUNG UP, AND
CHOKED THEM."

deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."



"BUT OTHER FELL INTO GOOD
GROUND, AND BROUGHT FORTH
FRUIT."

But always some of the good seed finds good soil and grows and brings forth fruit; so the Master who sends it and the servant who sows it need not be discouraged. Some who hear have prepared their hearts, they listen attentively, they decide honestly, they watch against thorns and evil weeds, they keep the ground open to the sunshine and showers God sends; and the seed, which has in it God's own life, fed and nourished by what it draws from this good soil, brings forth abundantly.

"The field is the world," and as the weary, patient, loving Master looked that day over the multitude gathered about him, thinking sadly how little of the good seed he was scattering would ever grow in those hearts, so he looks to-day upon you and upon me. Does he see the trodden roadside, the shallow, rocky soil, the choking thorns, or the prepared ground ready for the precious seed?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW TO PRAY.

IF you were going to be admitted to the presence of a great king that you might ask him for things which he alone could give, you would like very much that the king's own son should tell you how to go to his father, and just what to say to him. That was the way the disciples felt about Jesus. They were all accustomed to pray; some of them had been John's disciples, and he had taught them to pray; but they saw how Jesus found strength and comfort in communing with his Father, how he often spent whole nights in prayer, and they wanted him to teach them, that they too might ask and receive as he did. So, one day, after Jesus had been praying, they said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Jesus taught them a very short and simple prayer, which has ever since been called "the Lord's Prayer;" but he did not mean that they were always to use exactly those words. He only meant to teach us all how we should go to God, for what we should ask, and how sure we might be of receiving what we prayed for.

I. To whom we pray. The first words of Jesus were, "When ye pray, say, Father." In our hearts must be the child's love and trust and confidence appealing to the love and tenderness and wisdom of the Father. We cannot pray if we think only of God as a great king and ruler to whom we owe obedience, and whose gifts we take with thankfulness. A king would not be pleased

that his children should come to him in fear and trembling to ask for what they wanted, calling him "Your Majesty;" he would rather have them cling to his hands and nestle in his arms, calling him "dear father," and asking without fear for what they wanted, as if they were sure of his love and had no doubt he would give them whatever was best. So the very first thing for us to learn is to say from the heart, "Father!" as the child says it when, lost and tired and terrified, he catches sight of his father's face and springs to his arms, sure of safety and love and protection.

II. When we have learned to feel toward God so that at every thought of him the heart cries "Father!" we shall desire that everyone may know how good and dear he is, that they may love him also. This is the precious name we wish all the world to honor and hold sacred; this is the kingdom which men enter by becoming as little children, and in which the Father's will is done because they trust in his love and let him direct all things for them. So we shall pray that this name may be honored, this kingdom increased, this will become the will of all men; and what we desire and pray for we shall work for in all possible ways.

III. We are to pray for our daily bread, which includes all our daily needs—the food and raiment for which we are told to have no anxious care, the little things and the great things of which Jesus said, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Does he not give them a place here even before our spiritual needs, and bid us ask for them day by day lest we might forget that these things also are in our Father's hands, and that what our own labor seems to bring us is still controlled by him who careth for us?

IV. We must pray for ourselves ; for the help we need to make us the children of our Father and keep us so. We cannot tell all our needs, but perhaps three things might include them all—*forgiveness, guidance, deliverance* ; so Jesus bade us pray, “Forgive us our debts ; lead us not into temptation ; deliver us from evil.” “Forgive us our debts ” means more than “do not punish us for our sins ;” it means take sin away from us ; remove from our hearts the spirit of evil, put within us the spirit of good ; and this spirit *cannot* dwell in us unless we are ready to put away all anger and unkindness toward others and forgive as fully as we are forgiven.

“Lead us not into temptation ” reminds us that no one is so strong as to be in no danger of falling, that we are to keep away from those places, avoid those companions, and let alone those things that are likely to tempt us to evil, for how can we honestly pray that our Father may lead us in safe paths if we choose for ourselves dangerous ones ?

“Deliver us from evil ” assures us that there is a power that is stronger than Satan and all his kingdom, and nothing can threaten us from which our Father cannot and will not deliver us. Do we believe that ? We know he *can*, but is it sure he *will* ? Jesus says, “Ask and ye shall receive.” He bids us remember what even friends and acquaintances will do for one another when they are asked ; he bids us remember how gladly and freely earthly parents give their children the things they ask for, and be sure that our Father, who is all love and goodness, will be more ready than they to grant our requests. He says, “Everyone who asketh, receiveth ;” but do we always get what we ask for ? Not always, for often children ask for what the father knows

would harm them ; but if we ask with the child's spirit, if when we pray we say " Father " from the heart, we shall receive the thing we desire or a better. An earthly parent would not mock his child by giving him in place of what he wanted something useless, like a stone, or harmful, like a scorpion ; much less will our Father answer our prayers by giving us what will not meet our needs or will do us injury.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FORGIVENESS AND LOVE.

AMONG the multitudes that listened to the words of Jesus were always two classes—those who came to criticise and find fault, and those who felt they needed help and came to find it. Those who sought help from sickness or from sin received it and gave in return love and gratitude. But the Pharisees, who thought themselves too wise to be taught and too holy to need forgiveness, were only filled with jealousy and hatred. They were always watching for proof that Jesus was not what he said he was, and they showed their contempt of him and his teachings by calling him “a friend of sinners.” This name, by which they meant to dishonor Jesus, was one that he loved and sought. He came into the world to seek the lost that he might save them, and, though these proud Pharisees all needed his help, it was only those who felt that they were sinners whom he could save. This pitying Friend looked upon the sinful, suffering, untaught people with a heart full of compassion because they did not know how to escape from their sins, and he called out unto them, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

One of those who stood by and heard this gracious offer was a Pharisee named Simon. He was not weary or heavy laden; he thought he was very righteous; but he was interested in what Jesus had been doing, and as his house was perhaps near by he asked him to come in

and dine with him. The law of Moses taught him to be hospitable to strangers, but he did not care to show Jesus any honor lest he might be supposed to be one of his disciples. He did not greet him with a kiss or anoint his head with fragrant oil, as he would have done to an honored guest, or even call a servant to wash the dust from his feet when he laid off his sandals, as everyone did on entering a house. He gave him a place at his table, set food before him, but he had not made up his mind about Jesus.

There were many among those to whom Jesus spoke that were not like Simon. One of them was a woman who was called a sinner because she not only had sin in her heart, like the proud Pharisees who despised her, but her outward life was sinful. Simon and his friends would have thought they were polluted if their garments even brushed against her in the street, but when she heard Jesus say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," she believed the promise and said, "I will come." She followed to Simon's house, and, coming into the room where they were eating, reclining upon couches with their feet extended behind them, she knelt at the feet of Jesus, kissing them in token of her love and humility. The tears that dropped like rain upon them she wiped away with her long hair, and then anointed them with precious perfume. She was trying to express to this Friend of sinners her repentance and sorrow, her love and faith and gratitude, but for some time Jesus did not seem to notice her.

When he did speak it was to Simon, who sat thinking, "After all, I was mistaken in supposing this man was a prophet; he did some wonderful things, but if he

"THE TEARS THAT DROPPED UPON THEM SHE WIPED AWAY WITH HER LONG HAIR."



really was a holy prophet he would know that this woman who is kissing his feet is a sinner." The love and holiness that wanted to help sinners was beyond Simon's understanding, but he felt that, if Jesus was what he claimed to be, he ought to be able to read people's hearts, and he must have been astonished when Jesus read his heart and answered his thoughts just as if they had been spoken.

He began by telling Simon a story of a man who had two debtors—one who owed him a small sum and one who owed ten times as much, but as neither of them had anything to pay he forgave them both, and he asked the Pharisee which one would love him most. Simon answered, "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave most," and Jesus said, "Thou hast rightly judged." Then, at last, he turned to the woman and bade Simon look at her and at himself. Simon, who thought himself so good that God could have very little fault to find with him, felt no gratitude to one who offered to release him from his debt. He invited Jesus to his house, but he had neither shown him honor nor cared for his comfort. But this poor woman, who knew she was sinful and had nothing to pay, poured her tears and perfume upon the weary feet of this Friend who brought the blessed tidings, and kissed them in her love and humility. She loved much because she had been forgiven much, but those who feel little need of forgiveness feel little love.

This tender Friend of sinners spoke directly to the woman herself, and said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Faith brought forgiveness; forgiveness brought peace; and the promise which Jesus made was fulfilled. She came heavy laden, but in humility and repentance, and he took away her burden and gave her rest.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

JESUS had been teaching his disciples that the riches and power and opportunities given to us here might be so wisely used as to be of greater value than just for this short life. Men might build beautiful houses, but they would soon have to leave them, and then they would be poor indeed if they had been so foolish as not to think of the home where the soul was going after it left the body behind it, if they had not laid up any treasures in heaven, or prepared themselves to live in the mansions there. He told them that they were God's stewards, and should be faithful in using his money. But while the publicans listened the Pharisees laughed at his teachings and despised them. They expected to have a place in heaven because they were Abraham's children and kept the law of Moses, and not because they were like God in spirit, and so fit to dwell with him.

It was to these proud Pharisees that Jesus spoke this parable, this story of two men and two worlds. One of the men was rich; he wore beautiful clothing, such as princes wear; he lived in a palace and feasted every day. The other man was a beggar, his body covered with sores, and so helpless that he could only get some friends to lay him by the gates of the rich man's house, where he might share with the dogs the crumbs and scraps that were thrown away from the table or beg of the guests as they went in and out.

The rich man was not disturbed to see this poor Lazarus lying there. He did not think at all of the many commands God had given to those who had abundance to care for the poor and share with them ; he went on feasting and enjoying his good things until one day Lazarus was gone. His poor, diseased, suffering body was left to be buried somewhere out of sight, but Lazarus himself had gone to another world. He did not go alone ; the angels came for him, so we know he must have been one of God's children ; and they carried him to the company of God's children, where Abraham was, and he had a royal welcome and princely honor. I suppose all the pain and discomfort of his life in the body seemed no more to him than a bad dream does when you waken from it.

Perhaps the rich man may have gone on feasting for a time, but soon he died also. His body was buried in a costly tomb ; somebody else took his palace and his riches and his princely garments, and he too came into that other world, leaving all behind him, as if he had been only a beggar. He *was* a beggar now, because he had laid up treasure for himself and was not rich toward God. He had no friends in heaven to receive him there ; he was not like the people there, and was not fit to live with them. Instead of waking in happiness, as Lazarus did, he waked in misery. All he had loved and lived for was gone ; a great gulf separated him from those who had found their happiness in serving God and man ; his character was fixed and it was too late to change. Now, instead of despising Lazarus, he envied him, and would gladly have taken help and comfort from him, but Lazarus could not help him. Abraham could not help him. It would not even have done any good if Lazarus, or the rich man himself, had

gone back to the other world and told other foolish people what an awful mistake they were making in living for themselves and not heeding God's words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven;" they would not have listened.

In this story one man was very rich and the other very poor, but the lesson is for us all, whether we have great riches or not. We have no right to live just for self, to think only of our bodies, to turn away from those whom we might help and comfort. We are just as much bound to share our little as the rich man was to share his abundance.

We need not suppose that in this story Jesus meant to tell us exactly what we should find in that other world, but some things we may surely know he meant to teach us:

1. There is another world to which we go when we leave our bodies; the beggar went there when he died, and Abraham was still there after thousands of years.

2. In that world is both happiness and misery, but widely separated from each other and fixed beyond any change.

3. Our condition there depends upon our character and conduct here; we make our own place and portion and fix our own companionships.

4. In this world we may be honored, rich, and prosperous, yet find ourselves poor, friendless, and miserable when we come to the other; and so in this world we may be sick and friendless and unfortunate, yet find a place and a mansion waiting for us in our Father's house. We do not fail because we are rich, nor succeed because we are poor; we are condemned because we live for self, and crowned because we live for God.

CHAPTER XL.

SORROW AT BETHANY.

ABOUT two miles from Jerusalem was a little village where Jesus loved to go. This village was called Bethany, and in one of its pleasant homes lived three of the Lord's dear friends, Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. Martha seems to have been the eldest, and probably Lazarus was the youngest. They were very happy together, and were always glad to welcome Jesus to their home, to give him the best of everything, and to listen to the precious words he spoke. They all loved Jesus, and the Bible tells us, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." But he could not stay and rest with these friends, he went about weary and hungry, doing his blessed work and trying to help those who persecuted and hated him.

Could any trouble or sorrow come to those whom Jesus loved so well? Yes; trouble came to them just as it comes now to everyone. Jesus told his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." Trouble came to the home in Bethany. Lazarus fell sick and Jesus was far away in the wilderness beyond Jordan teaching great multitudes who came to hear him and healing them of their diseases.

The sisters of Lazarus knew where to go in trouble. They sent a message to Jesus to tell him about it. They did not say, "Lord, come quickly, for Lazarus is sick, and we want you to heal him." They sent just such a



JESUS IN THE HOME AT BETHANY.

message as you would send to your dear mother. They sent word, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," as if they knew they did not need to ask for anything because this loving Friend would surely do the best he could for them.

Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." And the messenger supposed he meant that Lazarus should not die. But when he got back to Bethany he found that Lazarus was already dead. His body was wrapped in graveclothes and laid away in a tomb cut like a cave in the rocks. Mary and Martha were weeping and saying, "O, if Jesus had only been here our brother would not have died." When the messenger told them what Jesus had said they did not understand it, but they kept the words in their hearts and wondered if it could be possible that even yet their brother might be given back to them. So they waited and wept and wondered for four long days, and still Jesus did not come.

Had Jesus forgotten his friends? Not a minute. He saw all that happened to them, and his loving heart ached for them, but he knew just the right time to help them. He waited two days in the wilderness, going on with his daily work. Then he said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep." Jesus meant the sleep of death; but the disciples thought he meant taking rest in sleep, so they answered, "Lord, if he is fallen asleep he will recover."

So Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes I was not there, so that ye may believe. Let us go unto him."

Jesus had come away into the desert because the Jews wanted to kill him; and now when the disciples heard

him say, "Let us go into Judea again," they said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" But Thomas, one of the disciples, was willing to go with Jesus into any danger; so he turned to his companions and said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Then they set out on the way back to Bethany. It took them more than two days to get there, and all the way the disciples must have been thinking of what Jesus had said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of his sleep." Did he really mean to call this dead man back to life after so many days? Surely, if he did, even the scribes and Pharisees must believe on him, and everyone would see that he was indeed the Son of God.

Wherever Jesus went a multitude followed him, and now as he came toward Bethany the tidings went before, "Jesus is coming!" and people went out to meet him and carried out their sick to be healed. The tidings came to Mary and Martha as they sat weeping in the house with their friends about them. Mary only thought, "Ah, it is too late now! Lazarus has been buried four days." And so she sat still in the house. But Martha remembered those strange words spoken to the messenger, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Who could tell what Jesus would even yet do? At least she would go and meet him. So she went out of the town to meet Jesus, for he had not yet come in, and told him all her sorrow and all her distress because the Jews had driven him away so that he could not be there to save her brother. Was it really too late for Jesus to help?

CHAPTER XLI.

SORROW TURNED INTO JOY.

LET us look again into the home in Bethany, whose joy had all been turned into sorrow because one of its dear ones was dead. Some one, perhaps the very messenger whom the sisters sent to tell Jesus that Lazarus was sick, brought word that at last their friend was coming. "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary sat still in the house."

Jesus had not yet come to the town, and when Martha met him she said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. And I know that even now, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee." Can you think what she wanted him to ask of God? Perhaps she did not really know. She only wanted him to know that even now she loved and trusted him and believed in his divine power. Jesus did not tell Martha he was going to raise her brother from the dead, but he said very comforting words to her. He bade her remember that some day all who sleep shall rise again from the dead; that those who believe in him can never really die, for even when the body dies the soul that has Jesus Christ within it goes on living. Martha was comforted. She said to Jesus, "I believe that thou art the Christ," and then she hurried back to the house to call Mary. Probably Jesus had said, "Where is Mary?" for we must not suppose that every word which they spoke is written down.

Martha came into the house and whispered to her sister, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," and as soon as Mary heard that she arose quickly and went to Jesus. All her friends who had come to comfort her followed after her, thinking she was going to the grave to weep there ; so they all came together to Jesus, and Mary fell down weeping at his feet. Jesus was troubled at the sight of her sorrow. He loved Lazarus also, and he, too, wept with the others, and groaned aloud. He asked them to take him to the grave, and they all went there. It was a cave, and a stone was rolled up against it for a door. The Jews watched Jesus, and while some said, "How he loved Lazarus!" others said, "But why did he let him die? He opened the eyes of the man that was born blind ; could he not have caused that even this man should not die?"

Then Jesus bade them take away the stone, but at first Martha was not willing. Her brother had been dead four days, and she knew the dear face she loved so much would be changed. The body had begun to decay and go back to dust again, now that the soul had left it. But, when Jesus had reminded her that he had promised if she would only believe she should see the glory of God, she remembered the words which the messenger brought back to her, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Then they rolled away the stone.

Think of them standing there by the open door of the grave in the rock! Mary and Martha clinging to each other, scarcely daring to look into that dark cave ; the Jews watching Jesus with curious eyes, and the blessed Master himself forgetting all that were about him, and lifting his eyes toward heaven as if he looked right into the face of the Father to whom he spoke. All the time

he must have been asking, "Let this man's soul come back to him again," and now he said aloud, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me."

When he had given thanks to God for hearing his prayer, he called with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" He called aloud so that everyone might hear and know who gave such a strange command; but if he had whispered ever so softly Lazarus would have heard and obeyed. Jesus once said the day would come when all that were in the graves should hear his voice, but the Jews did not understand or believe him. Now, while they are all watching that dark cave, what do they see? They see something moving in the darkness; they see the dead man, lying there so still and white, wrapped about with graveclothes, rise up in his place and come forth before them all. It is really Lazarus, the friend they laid in the grave four days ago. He looks around as if he hardly knew what it all meant; and Mary and Martha can hardly believe that they have their dear brother alive again. At first they are all so bewildered that they do not know what to do, and Jesus has to tell them to loose Lazarus from the bands that are fastened about his hands and feet.

I am sure Jesus went home with them to Bethany and rejoiced with them over the joyful ending of their sorrow; for our loving Lord, who wept with those who wept, was ready also to share the joy and gladness of those who were happy, just as to-day we can go to him, in sad days or glad ones, and be sure of his loving sympathy. Why does Jesus not raise all our dear ones from the dead, and so turn the sorrow of all who mourn into joy? Because when he takes us to be with him that is far better than to go on living here; and it would be a

sorrowful thing for us to come back to earth after we have lived in our beautiful heavenly home. Jesus raised Lazarus to show that he really had power over death, so that his children might not fear to trust him and so that all men might believe on him. But now that Jesus himself has died and risen from the grave, we know that because he lives we shall live also. Living or dying, we belong to him, and he says of all that belong to him he will not lose one, but will raise them up at the last day.



CHAPTER XLII.

JESUS AND ZACCHEUS.

ZACCHEUS was a rich man and he was a Jew, but his own people despised and hated him. They despised him because he had gone into the service of their conquerors and made it his business to collect the tax money which these conquerors made them pay ; they hated him because his riches had all been taken out of them. A publican or taxgatherer had great temptation to be unjust and dishonest, and no one expected anything else of him ; he was despised as a thief and a robber, and men who thought themselves honorable would have nothing to do with him. But this man heard of Jesus, the wonderful teacher whose power and wisdom were so great that all the people were astonished at them, yet who was not ashamed to talk to publicans and own them for friends and disciples. He had even said that the prayer of a publican might be more acceptable to God than that of a proud Pharisee, and Zaccheus wanted to see the man who dared to say that. He heard that Jesus was coming to Jericho, where he lived, and he went out to see him as he entered the city. He did not expect to speak to him, or that Jesus would notice him ; he wanted to see how he looked, and when he found he could not get near enough because of the great crowd he ran on before and climbed up into a tree, where he could see better.

Zaccheus only wanted to know more about Jesus, but



ZACCHEUS.

"And he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him,"

Jesus already knew Zaccheus. He knew his name and all about him ; and while Zaccheus was looking at him Jesus looked up, called him by name, and bade him make haste and come down because he wished to go to his house. Jesus knows everyone that seeks to find him ; he was thinking about them before they thought about him, he knows them better than their best friends do ; he thinks of them by name, he speaks to them by name. He does not say, " Here is a great sinner who ought to be saved," but, " Here is a lost one whom I came to save. Zaccheus ! John ! Mary ! make haste and come to me ; I am coming to see you."

The invitation came from Jesus. He invited Zaccheus to receive him into his house, and the man received him joyfully. It did not trouble him at all that the people were displeased ; Jesus had come to him and he did not care about anything else. The invitation always comes first from Jesus ; he always comes in as soon as we are ready to receive and welcome him.

It was not just into his house that Zaccheus received Jesus ; he received him into his heart, into his life, to be his ruler and master. He must have heard of his teachings, for he understood that to follow Jesus meant a great deal.

Zaccheus did not wait to see how he should feel to-morrow. He stood up at the feast before his family and his friends and the people who were looking on, and called Jesus Lord, telling him that he was ashamed of his past life and meant to live very differently in the future. He did not say, " Sometime I mean to be generous and give to the poor, and sometime I will pay back to those whom I have wronged the money that I have unjustly taken." He meant to begin then, from that

very minute, to be generous and to be honest, and so he says, "The half of my goods I give to the poor," *I do it now*; "and whatever I have taken wrongfully I restore it fourfold," *I do it now*.

The publican had received Jesus and taken up his service, and now Jesus receives Zaccheus. He does not wait to try him to see if he will hold out, if he really will do as he says; he takes him that he may help him, he takes him that he may teach him, he takes him that he may strengthen him against his own selfishness and greed and the force of evil habit and keep him up to the purpose of that hour. He says, "This day is salvation come to this house," but it is a salvation that Zaccheus will have to work out in spite of temptation and difficulty. He is a new man in purpose, he must become a new man in habit.

The lost need not fear that they shall seek Jesus without finding him; they might miss the way, but Jesus cannot, and he is seeking them. He came to seek them, to seek *all* the lost, and he only seeks that he may save. It is the same sweet story always, the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, but when he finds it it is lost no longer, it is the sheep that *was* lost but now is found, that is loved, that is carried tenderly, that is rejoiced over.



CHAPTER XLIII.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

JESUS did not go to feasts for idle pleasure. Whether he was sitting with his disciples by the shores of the Sea of Galilee and eating fish broiled upon the coals, or reclining on a couch at the table of some rich Pharisee, always he was thinking of his Father's business, and seeking to teach his hearers the great truths of his kingdom. In the fourteenth chapter of Luke we find him again, on a Sabbath day, sitting at meat in the house of a Pharisee, and teaching by his acts and his words mercy, humility, and unselfish generosity. He taught *mercy*, by stopping as he went into the house to heal the man with the dropsy; *humility*, by telling those who were eagerly striving for the best and most honorable seats at the table that the truest honors came by not seeking the best things for ourselves; *unselfishness*, by bidding them make their feasts for the poor, who really needed them, rather than the rich, who could return their favors. They might not be repaid in this life, but by and by God would exalt those who had humbled themselves, and those who had cared for his poor should be welcomed to feast with him in his kingdom above.

The people who sat at meat with him thought these were wise words. One of the guests said, "Yes, that will be a great reward; it will be a blessed thing to eat bread in the kingdom of God."

As Jesus heard this he may perhaps have thought,

“That is what all these guests would say; everybody thinks it would be a blessed thing to be admitted into heaven, and everyone means to go there, but how many of you will fail!”

So, turning to the guest who had spoken, he told him a parable to show them all how foolishly people act about the blessedness God offers them. He told them the story of a great supper given by a rich man, in which the guests behaved just as they themselves were doing about the invitation God sends to his feast. We all know the story (Luke xiv, 16-24); let us see if we can see why this man was like our Father, and the men who treated his invitation so carelessly like the people to whom Jesus spoke, and perhaps like some of us.

1. It was a great supper, and many were invited. So we are told that our Father's kingdom was prepared for us from the foundation of the world; that it has never even entered into our thoughts to imagine such wonders and delights as await us there. And to this feast everyone is invited; whosoever will may come.

2. The guests who were invited meant to come; they did not refuse the invitation. So, when we hear and read about this kingdom and this feast, we all mean to be there. We all think it would be blessed to have a place in heaven, and we do not mean to be shut out.

3. The guests busied themselves about other things—about their farms and their business and their families. These things were all right and proper, but they forgot their invitation, and when they were sent for they were not ready. So we forget our Father's invitation because we are so busy with the things of this life. Instead of saying, “I must live so as to be ready any minute,” our thoughts and our plans are all about our own business.

4. The guests all had excuses for not being ready, and they thought they were very good excuses. They did not wish to stay away altogether, but to be excused for this time, until it was more convenient. So we make a great many excuses for not being ready just yet when our Father sends his servants to bid us come. Our Father is much more forgiving than the man in the story was. His guests were sent for but once, and when they made excuses he was angry, and said, "They shall none of them taste of my supper;" but God sends, again and again, messenger after messenger, to say, "Come, for all things are now ready."

5. The guests who refused to come were shut out, and the good things which they had slighted were given to others. So God may leave us to our business and our pleasure and our eager pursuit of riches and honor, and reveal to others the precious things which we neglect and slight. Others may sit down to the feast and we be shut out; turning away from heavenly bread we may be left to feed on husks.



CHAPTER XLIV.

SLAVES OF SIN.

ONCE when Jesus was talking to some of the people who said they wished to be his disciples he told them that the way to be his disciples indeed was not just to follow him about and listen to his words, but to love to do his commandments and to go on day after day trying to learn his will, so that they might do it always in their hearts and in their lives. He told them that if they served him that way they would grow wiser and happier every day as they understood more about truth, and that instead of being bond servants—that is, servants that wear chains—they should be free and serve with glad hearts.

The Jews did not like to be called bond servants, or slaves; they answered Jesus very angrily, and said, “We never were slaves; why do you talk about making us free?”

But Jesus said, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;” that is, a slave who does just what his master bids him, and who cannot get away from his service. Would you be willing to be a slave to such a master as sin? Do you think any one would be so foolish as to say, “Now I am going to take sin for my master; I will promise to do as Satan bids me, and I will let my master fasten a chain about me so that I cannot get away?” No one would make such a promise. Yet Satan has a great many servants who often wish and try

to get away, but unless God helps them to get free they never can make their escape. How did they come to be his slaves?

Almost always it was because they did not wish to have any master, but to live just to please themselves. The Bible says to us, "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price," and, "One is your master, even Christ." If we go to this blessed Master and ask him to take us into his service, and direct us every minute of our lives, to keep us from temptation, and deliver us from the power of Satan so that we may not fall into any of his snares, then we shall have a Master whose service will be full of delight, a Master who says to those who accept him, "I will not call you servants, but friends; you need not be slaves, but my own dear children, and I will keep you so that the wicked one shall not touch you."

But some foolish people think they can take care of themselves, and not serve anyone. They do not mean to be the slaves of Satan, and Satan does not tell them he is going to make them his slaves. He goes to work very carefully to set a trap for them. I saw a cruel boy once who had a mouse with a string tied to its leg. He would let it run a little way, but just as the poor thing thought it was free the string would stop it, until a lady cut the string and the little prisoner ran into his hole. The mouse went into a trap to get something that smelled good and tasted good, and so it was caught and held.

Can you think of some of the traps that Satan sets for people so that he may put his chains on them and make them his servants? Drunkenness is a sin, and the drunkard is its servant. He did not mean to be a rag-

ged, red-faced, furious man, staggering along the street, but when he was a little boy, perhaps, he began by drinking cider because he loved it, and then beer because he wanted to do as men did, and wine because he thought it was gentlemanly to do so, and then whisky and brandy because he thought it made him strong to work, until he became such a slave to this sin that he could not get away from it.

Anger is a sin that has a great many servants. They begin with angry feelings, and then speak angry words and make angry threats, until they come to angry blows and cruel, wicked deeds.

We could make a long, black list of ugly sins that have many servants, such as evil-speaking and deceit and disobedience, but the thing for us to remember is this: every time we do an unkind or dishonest or disobedient act, or speak an angry, untruthful, envious, impure word, or even think a wrong thought, we are making ourselves the servants of these bad masters. The only way to be free from them is to take Jesus for our Master and give him our loving service. We have many little servants ourselves. Our hands, our feet, our lips, our eyes, our ears are all servants that must do as we bid them; so if we choose Jesus Christ for our Master we must see that all our servants obey him and do his will.

“ In the morning I will pray,
Help me serve thee, Lord, to-day !
Lips and tongue and hands and feet
Find thy service pure and sweet ;
And thy loving presence shine
Ever in this heart of mine.”

CHAPTER XLV.

ENTERING THE KINGDOM.

ENTERING the kingdom of God does not mean going to heaven. In one sense everyone is in God's kingdom, because this world and all other worlds belong to him; but Jesus said to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is within you," and when he talked about entering that kingdom he meant having the peace and love of God reign in the heart, and having no wish or will but to be obedient to him. Jesus said once, "I am the way," and bade all who would enter in walk in his footsteps; he said, "I am the door," and bade all who would enter come to him; and when we come he tells us that the very first step is to become humble and teachable and obedient; that is the only way to have the peace of God enter our hearts and make them a part of his kingdom.

That which fits us to enter this kingdom is not goodness, but humility; not knowledge, but teachableness; not ability to choose, but willingness to be led; not wisdom to understand all God does, but readiness to do all he says.

This is what Jesus taught, and, if we remember it, we can understand why he welcomed the little children and said the kingdom of heaven was of such as they. For the qualities we wish most to see in our children, the things which make them lovely as children, are just these qualities which God wishes to see in his children—



THE CHILD MODEL.

"And he took a child and set him in the midst of them,"

qualities which find open soil in a child's heart, but which, sometimes, are very hard to plant when pride and worldly wisdom, self-confidence, and the cares of this life have taken such deep root that they cannot easily be pulled up. Three things, then, we may learn about children and the kingdom of heaven :

1. Children may most easily enter it. They have less to overcome of evil habit ; less hindrances in the cares and ambitions of life, and just because they are children a child's life of obedience, faith, and trust is as natural toward their heavenly Father as toward their earthly parents.

2. Parents should bring their children. When Jesus said, "Suffer them to come," he spoke of babes, that must be brought by others; and so, if we would have our children enter his kingdom, we ourselves must do our part in bringing them for the divine blessing. We must ask for their helplessness the Master's touch; we must bring them to him by example, by instruction, by training; we must say to them from their earliest years, "You are the Lord's; you belong to him; I gave you to him, and I dare not do anything in your training which he would not approve."

3. "Forbid them not." It is not always in words of rebuke that children are forbidden to come to Jesus; many a disciple has stood in the way of his own cold, unloving, mistaken interpretation of the Master's will and character.

We read, "If a man love not his brother whom he has seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen?" and how shall the child be drawn to his heavenly Father, if those who say they dwell in him show so little of his spirit? To many a child the awful Eye, seeing in

darkness, watchful of the thoughts of the hearts, is a reality before which he hides and shudders, while the tender love, the unwearied care, the ready and perfect forgiveness, are only the vaguest of beliefs. He never thinks of God as on his side, against the devil, against himself, the lower self of which even children are conscious; he thinks of God as his judge, not as his helper. We do not forbid, but we hinder, or we fail to help.

The way the child enters is the only way; the rich young ruler failed because it was too hard for him to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. He wanted to win the blessedness of God's kingdom in heaven without belonging to it here upon earth. He was accustomed to rule, he could not become an obedient follower; he loved honor and comfort, he could not face contempt and poverty; he had great treasure here, he could not let it go for treasure in heaven. We do not go to Jesus simply to have our sins forgiven and be let into heaven at last; we go to him for power to grow into his likeness, for help to overcome evil, to be lifted up that we may lift up others; and we cannot begin too young.

It was not to the children, but to the timid mothers and the hindering disciples, that Jesus spoke; and it is to fathers and mothers and teachers that I should like to press home the command, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such *is*" (not may be) "the kingdom of heaven."



CHAPTER XLVI.

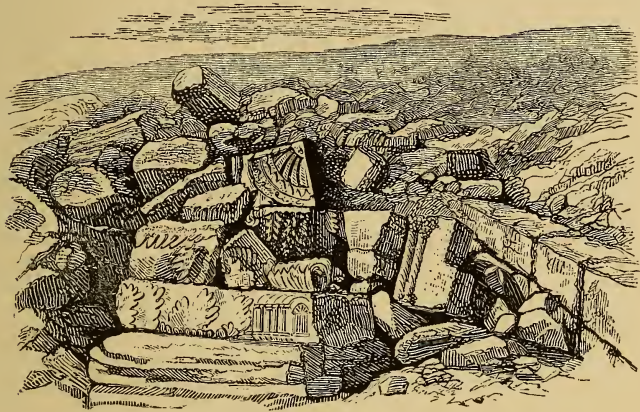
CARELESS HEARERS.

WHEN we read of the miracles of our Lord Jesus we feel sure that if we had lived in Capernaum and seen him heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, and raise the dead we should have been ready at once to believe on him and become his disciples. But to be a disciple of Jesus Christ means to repent of sin, to forsake all evil ways, to trust in him and take him for our leader and guide. It is obeying the words of Jesus that makes us his disciples; and the people who followed him about or gathered in crowds to see his mighty deeds wanted only to see a wonderful sight or to have their bodies made well; they did not care about being cleansed from sin.

So in the cities where the most of the mighty works of Jesus were done, there were very few who really repented of their sins. Jesus was very patient with them; he went on preaching and teaching and healing; but one day, the Bible says, he upbraided them because they did not repent. He told them they would be punished for not obeying the word that was sent to them. He told them that the people of Tyre and Sidon, and the people of Sodom, whom God had destroyed for their great wickedness, were better than they were, because they had not been taught so well or known so much about the right way. And he told them the day would come when they too should be destroyed, when their cities would be

broken down and ruined, so that men should not know where the city of Capernaum used to be.

Jesus did not speak these words of warning for the people of his day alone. He meant us all to understand that we must give account to God for all the messages he has sent to us and everything that might have helped us to be better. We have preachers and teachers and churches and Sunday schools and Bibles and books and



RUINS OF A CITY SUPPOSED TO BE CAPERNAUM.

papers, but very often we only use them to amuse and please and entertain us, and forget all about repenting of our sins and bearing fruit for God. When we do this we are just like the people of Capernaum, who only wanted to see the miracles, and did not care to obey the commands of Christ. There will come a day when God will say to us, "Did you repent? Did you try to obey my words? When I gave you so much did you share it with others, and was your life so beautiful as to lead others to honor me?"

But can we understand what God wishes us to do? How can children be wise enough to understand the things of God and find the way to him? In this very passage Jesus tells us he thanks God that he has chosen to teach these things to his little ones; that what the wisest men could never find out by their own wisdom God himself will show to everyone who really desires to know his will. The Lord Jesus came and lived on earth on purpose that by knowing him we might understand God and learn how to please him. To everyone who wishes to get rid of sin, he says, "*Come unto me.*"

No one is happy, no one is really at rest, whose sins are not forgiven. In heathen countries people often put themselves to cruel tortures to try and atone for sin. The wrong things they have done are like a heavy burden, and they cannot get rid of the burden. But Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That is the way for everyone to find rest—to go to Jesus for pardon and peace.

And when he has taken the burden of sin away, so that we are no more Satan's slaves, but God's happy children, he says to us, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." Then, instead of carrying our heavy burden, we are to help the Lord Jesus carry his burdens, and work with him to save others. He will teach us how to do it; he will teach us how to love it, for his service is not hard. He says himself, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light;" and those who take it find rest to their souls. But we must not forget that he says; "Learn of me," and ask him every day to teach us to be like him, that we may be of those who are blest for doing our Father's commandments, and not punished, like the people of Capernaum, for only seeing and hearing.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Do you remember what the Pharisees did to the blind man whose eyes Jesus had opened? They said to him, "We will not have you in our church if you say Jesus is the Son of God. You must not listen to his words or be taught by him." And because the man said of Jesus, "Surely he must be from God or he could not do such miracles," they cast him out of their church. They called themselves shepherds, whose business it was to lead the people and take care of them, as a shepherd cares for his sheep. But Jesus said, "You are more like robbers than shepherds; you do not really care for the sheep or protect them from trouble and danger. If you loved them as a good shepherd loves his sheep you would not turn them out to take care of themselves as you do this poor man; you would be ready to lay down your lives to protect them."

These Pharisees were bad shepherds; they would not follow Jesus themselves or allow the people to follow him. Paul and John and the disciples who really loved Jesus were good shepherds, who wanted to lead everybody into the blessed flock of their Master. But Jesus himself is the greatest and best shepherd; so much better and more loving than any other that he is called *the Good Shepherd*. He chose that name himself. Instead of saying, "I am your King, whom you must all obey," or, "I am your Master, whom you must all serve,"



A SHEPHERD OF MODERN PALESTINE.
"He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him."

he said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

In that country there were great flocks of sheep that went out to feed upon the mountain sides and in the green valleys by the little brooks. At night they were shut up safely in the folds, and in the morning the shepherd opened the door and called them out. The sheep knew their own shepherd's voice, and they followed wherever he led them to the green pastures and by the cool waters. All day the shepherd watched, that no wild beast might harm them and no robber carry them away. He knew every sheep, and if any careless one got lost he would go and search for it till he found it. If any sheep were sick, or any little lamb too weak and tired to keep up with the rest, the good shepherd took it in his arms and carried it. This was the very country where David watched his father's sheep, when he was a little shepherd lad, and where he boldly slew the lion and the bear that came to seize a lamb from his flock. The people knew all about good shepherds and what care they ought to take of the sheep; but we can understand also what Jesus meant when he said, "I am the good Shepherd."

See how many beautiful things this good Shepherd says about himself:

"I know my sheep." He knows every one of them, no matter how small or weak. He knows you just as your mother would know you if you were with a thousand other children.

"I am known of mine." Just as even a little baby that cannot speak a word knows its own mother, not because of wisdom, but because of love in its heart.

The good Shepherd "calls his sheep by name," and

they "hear his voice" and "follow him." Jesus does not speak to them like a stranger, and say, "Come, children, come, follow me." He calls you by name. He says, "Come, Mary! come, Henry! follow me."

The good Shepherd "leads his sheep." He tells them where to go and what to do, and he himself goes before.

"He feeds his sheep." He gives them food for their souls, so that they may grow strong and wise.

"He protects them from enemies." He says he will keep every one of them so that Satan may not touch them, and that no one is strong enough to snatch them out of his hand.

"He loves all his sheep." Wherever they are, in Christian lands and in heathen lands; and just as the shepherd goes to hunt up the sheep that are lost in the wilderness, and never rests till he brings them home, so this loving Shepherd seeks for all his children till he brings them into his safe and happy flock.

Last of all, and greatest of all, this good Shepherd "lay down his life for his sheep" when he died to save them from their sins; but he took it again at his glorious resurrection, that they need not fear even death, since their Shepherd would go with them through its shadow.

Why does the good Shepherd so care for and guard his flock? Jesus tells us that also. Because they are his own. They belong to him. You belong to him. He bought you with a great price, even his own precious blood, and he wants you to listen to his voice and follow him that he may bring you safely home. Then you will see his face and understand how true it was that he was always by your side, helping you to do right, glad when you were good, and sorry when you did wrong.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WORDS OF WARNING.

THE closing passages (Matt. vii, 13-27) of the Sermon on the Mount are heavy with warnings.

Two ways. The Lord Jesus did not wish us to think we could be the children of God and walk in the way to heaven without being in earnest about it. He said there were two ways to live in this world. One was like a broad, easy road with a wide gate leading into it, and a great many people walked along in it without stopping to think where they were going; that was the wrong road, that led to destruction. Most of the people in it were those who went on doing what pleased them without caring whether it pleased God or not. Then there was another way to live that was like a narrow road with a little gate. We must be willing to be careful what we do, and be in earnest about pleasing God and finding the way to him if we would walk in this one, but it is the way to Life. We are all of us walking in one way or the other.

Two kinds of guides. If one road leads to Death and one to Life it is very important that we should choose the right one. God has given us many teachers to guide us right, and Satan also has his servants to try to lead us in his way. How can we tell what guides to follow? Just as we tell good trees from bad ones, by the fruits they bear, so Jesus said we could tell true guides from false ones by the way they lived and taught others

to live. If the things they teach make us love God better and try more earnestly to please him, if they make us more careful not to sin and more patient and loving with each other, these are good fruits that must come from good trees. But if they teach us that we need not obey all God's commandments or fight against sin or pray for daily help and daily forgiveness, no matter how pleasant they seem, they are like trees that have beautiful blossoms but yield sour, bitter, unwholesome fruit.

Two kinds of fruit. We ourselves are bearing fruit, either good fruit or bad fruit, and that is the way God will judge us. We show what we *are* by what we do. Jesus said, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire," which means that God will destroy those who do evil for themselves and others. Even in this life those whose hearts are not filled with love to God and man grow sour and mean and hateful, and are like dead trees, and when they come into another world there will be nothing in them to be happy in the company of God and the angels. They are fit only to be destroyed.

Saying and doing. But if we only *say*, "I will choose the narrow way, I will follow the true guide, I will bear good fruit," that will not bring us into the kingdom. It is not saying, but doing, which shows what we really are. I have a rosebush in my garden which has a fine name written on a slip of wood and fastened to it. But when it blossomed it was only a small, pale rose, not at all like what it promised to be. So Jesus says a great many people call him Lord and pretend to be his servants and to be trying to please him who do not really wish to do his will. They do good deeds to be praised by others

or to please themselves; they are not the servants of the Lord Jesus waiting for his orders and going on his errands. Some of them will be really disappointed when they come to stand before Christ at last and hear him say, "I never knew you, depart from me," instead of, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

Two builders. Can we be *sure* that Jesus will not say, "Depart from me," to us? There is one way, and that is to take Jesus himself for our guide, to make him our teacher, and his words our law. Then we shall have his Spirit within us and the fruits of the Spirit will make our lives pleasing to God and helpful to men.

We shall be like a wise builder who builds his house upon a rock so firmly that no storms or floods can destroy it.

But if we only talk about being good and wish we were good, if we go to church and hear God's words or read them ourselves in the Bible and then go away and forget them, or only try to be good that we may be praised by men, we are like a foolish builder who builds his house on the sand. When the rain beats on it and the floods rush under it and the winds blow, the house will fall, and so, when it is hard to do right, or Satan tempts us, or we think we can do wrong and nobody know it, our goodness will fall down because it has not Jesus to make it stand. Will you choose the right way and the true guide? Will you open your heart to the Spirit of life that you may bear good fruit and build up the true foundation that you may stand in time of trial? Will you be one of those who say, or those who do? of those who hear, or those who obey?

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE HARVEST AND THE LABORERS.

THE Lord Jesus did not stay in Capernaum or in any one city. He went about from place to place, sometimes in one town or village and sometimes in another, and wherever he went his twelve disciples, whom he had chosen out from all the rest, went with him. They heard his words and saw his miracles, and often when they were alone with their Master he said things to them which he did not say to the multitudes. There were three things which the Scripture tells us Jesus did. He went about *teaching, preaching, and healing.*

1. He taught in the synagogues, reading the words of the law of God to the people and explaining to them what it really meant. The scribes and priests had taught them so badly that they did not understand that what God wanted was the service of loving hearts and pure lives, but thought they could win his favor by bringing offerings and gifts, and saying long prayers, and trying to observe all the hard and troublesome rules which the priests had made for them. Jesus taught them the true way to please God.

2. He preached the gospel of the kingdom. He told them that God had sent into the world his own Son to save them from their sins and set up a kingdom of peace and love and blessedness, into which they might all enter if they would.

3. He healed every sickness and disease among them,

out of his love and pity, and to prove to them that he really was the Son of God, with all power upon earth.

But the more he was with them the more his heart ached for them when he saw that they had no true, careful, loving guides and teachers, but were like sheep without any shepherd, scattered abroad among dangerous enemies, with no one to bring them into the fold.

He said to his disciples: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." More laborers were needed to do God's work; how should they be found? Jesus told them what to do. He said, "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send them forth."

That is the first thing for us to do when we see so much work to be done for God and no one to do it. The world is God's harvest field, and if we ask him *in faith*, as the people did whom Jesus healed, he will send some one to gather in his precious sheaves.

But perhaps we ourselves may be the ones he sends. When Jesus had bidden his disciples pray that some one might be sent he called them to him and sent them out to preach and to teach and to heal just as he had done. If we are really anxious that God's harvest may be gathered in we shall be glad to hear him say, "Go ye," as he said to his twelve disciples.

How the laborers were prepared. Jesus had been teaching them by his words and by his examples all the time they had been with him, but now he did one thing more for them—"He gave them power." They had no power of their own, but in the name of Jesus and by his power they could cast out evil spirits and heal diseases. Even little children, with the power which Jesus gives, have done blessed work for him and led others into his

kingdom, and without his power the best and wisest men can do nothing.

To whom he sent them. All the people in the world need to hear the news of the kingdom, but Jesus told his disciples to go first to their own people, whom he called the lost sheep of the house of Israel; the sheep that had once belonged to God's flock, but had lost their way and had no good shepherd. When they were gathered in they would go after other wanderers, or, if they would not listen, then the message would be sent to others.

How they were to preach. They were not to wait till they got to a good place, where there were plenty of people. Jesus said, "*As ye go, preach.*"

That is the way Jesus preached; everywhere, by the wayside, sitting to rest at the well, wherever he was, he was always ready to teach and to help somebody. That is the way he means us all to preach, *as we go*, every day, everywhere. By the words we speak, by the kind deeds we do, by the way we look and act and live; in our homes, at school, at work, always we may be preaching as we go, glorifying our Father and leading others to glorify him.

What they were to preach. They were to say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." No one need to wait to find God or to go to any other place or do any hard thing to enter his kingdom; it is right at hand; whosoever will may enter. This is what they were to say wherever they went, and, to prove they really were God's messengers, they were to use the power that he had given them to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils, as Jesus had done.

And though God's laborers now do not need to have

exactly this kind of power given to them he bids them do all they can for men's bodies as well as their souls, and he has promised a reward to those who give even a cup of cold water in his name.

How to give. All our good things for men's souls and men's bodies are to be given freely, not grudgingly and because we must, not selfishly, as little as we can, but freely, because God has given freely to us. He sent his Son without waiting for our asking, because he loved us and longed to help us. So, freely and gladly and of our best, we should give to others.



CHAPTER L.

WATCHING.

THE disciples thought it was very important for them to know the exact time when their Lord was coming back again to this earth. But though Jesus told them some of the signs which should be seen before he came he did not tell them when it should be. He told them he surely was coming again, and that every eye should see him "coming in the clouds with great power and glory;" but it was not for them to know the day or the hour when this should be. When they saw these signs of which he had told them coming to pass, then they might know the time was near, just as when the little green buds first begun to swell on the fig tree they knew that summer was near, though they could not see it. He told them that even when they saw no sign at all of his coming back, though year after year should pass, and all things seem to go on just as they had done, they were to remember that he surely would return, for he had told them so, and though heaven and earth might pass away his word should never pass away.

If they did not know the time, and could not know it, was there any need of watching? Should not they just go on without troubling themselves about it or thinking of it at all? Is that the way a child would do whose father had gone away on a journey from which he might at any time return? No; he would be all the time watching and thinking, "Perhaps he will come to-day or

to-morrow. I must be ready to welcome him. I wonder if I have done everything as he would like it. I must finish this work that he gave me before he comes; I have no time to waste, for he may come any day."

That is exactly the way in which Jesus bade his disciples wait for his coming. He said, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." And then he explained it by a parable. He said, "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

The disciples felt so sure that Jesus was very soon coming back that they might have thought they alone needed to be told what to do while they were waiting. But Jesus knew that hundreds of years must pass and many generations wait for their Lord, and so he said, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

All means you and me, and everybody; so let us think a little about the way we are to watch.

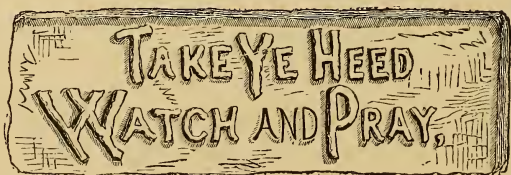
Though Jesus had gone away to heaven, like the man who went on a journey, this world is his also. He calls it his house, and says he had left its business in the hands of his servants. He has given to everyone his work. Whatever we have in this world belongs to God, and whatever work we do must be done for him and so as to please him. It is not only great men and wise men, teachers and preachers and rulers, to whom God has given work; the story says he gave to every man his work. Some could do one thing and some another,

but all sorts of work was needed, and each one had only his own part to account for; and just so it is with each one of us. The first half of Mark xiii, 33, teaches us the three things which are necessary if we would please our Lord: "Take ye heed, watch and pray."

First. "Take heed." We must not think it does not matter how we do our work, or learn our lessons, or play, or talk, or look. We must not think our work is too small or unimportant to be done for God; everything may be done for him; everyone's help is needed.

Second. "Watch." We must not forget God while we are working; we must watch for him and think about him. And there is another reason for watching: we are told to watch because Satan is always at hand to lead us into evil; and that is why the third thing is joined with watching.

Third. "Pray." Neither trying nor watching will enable us to do our work and have our hearts waiting to welcome the Lord unless while we work and watch we pray. It is not enough that we "take heed;" we need God to take heed for us, to keep us from temptation and deliver us from evil.



CHAPTER LI.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

WHEN our Lord spoke to the people in parables he always chose something with which they were familiar—something in their daily life and experience. They knew all about the care of sheep, how the good shepherd must lead and care for them, bringing them into the fold at night, seeking them when they wandered away, and often risking his own life for them. So when he said, "I am the good shepherd," they understood just what it meant to care for men's souls as the shepherd cared for his flock.

They knew all about vineyards and how much labor and expense were necessary to cover one of their steep, rocky hillsides with strong, fruitful vines. There were the wild growths to be rooted out, the soil to be prepared and enriched, a wall to be built for protection, plants carefully set and tended, watchmen kept on guard, and many other things done before fruit-bearing was possible.

When Jesus, on the last day of his teaching, told the parable of the vineyard the people who listened understood that their own nation was the vineyard which the Lord had so cared for, and from which he had a right to expect fruit. The priests and the rulers knew that they were the unfaithful servants who rejected their Lord's messengers and who were even then plotting to kill the beloved Son who had been sent last of all; but

it only filled them with greater hatred to have their unfaithfulness pointed out and words of warning spoken to them. The parable may have done them no good at all, but people have been reading and studying it ever since and learning the lesson which it was meant to teach.

The owner of the vineyard. Everywhere the Bible teaches us that this world and all worlds belong to God. Whatever we have is his, and only intrusted to us. He prepared the world for us to live in ; we could not exist without him, and, as the vines are carefully set in the vineyard, so our places in the world are made ready for us that we may grow and bear fruit. He is the Lord of the vineyard because of what he has done for it, and he asks for his share of its fruit. We ourselves are vines of God's planting, and he expects from us love and patience and obedience and faith, all those heavenly graces which are the fruits of the Spirit.

The keepers of the vineyard. While every life is to bring forth fruit in itself we are also the keepers of God's vineyard, bound to care for, protect, and make the most of his property, remembering his ownership and being always ready to give an account to him. The unfaithful servants thought because their lord had gone so far away they could use his property for themselves, just as we sometimes forget that the things which God intrusts to us are not our own, and live selfishly, making no return to our Lord. He gives us his open word, he gives us Christian teaching, he gives us all the riches of knowledge and freedom and intelligence, and he expects us to make our return to him by pure, noble, godly lives, and by sharing our blessings with others.

Patience. God bears long with us. He does not at once punish us for our selfishness. The lord of the vine-

yard sent messenger after messenger, hoping the husbandmen would repent ; and so in many ways God pleads with us to remember his claims.

Punishment. The last, the greatest, the best thing which the owner of the vineyard could do was to send his son to plead with the unfaithful husbandmen ; the last and the greatest thing God could do for us was done when he sent his beloved and only Son to reconcile us to him. This greatest thing is already done, and the voice of the Son is added to the voices of all the other messengers, saying, " For ye are not your own : ye are bought with a price ; " " I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service ; " " Let the love of God dwell in you richly ; " " Having your fruit unto holiness ; " " See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

If we will not listen the solemn judgment is spoken against us, " He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others."

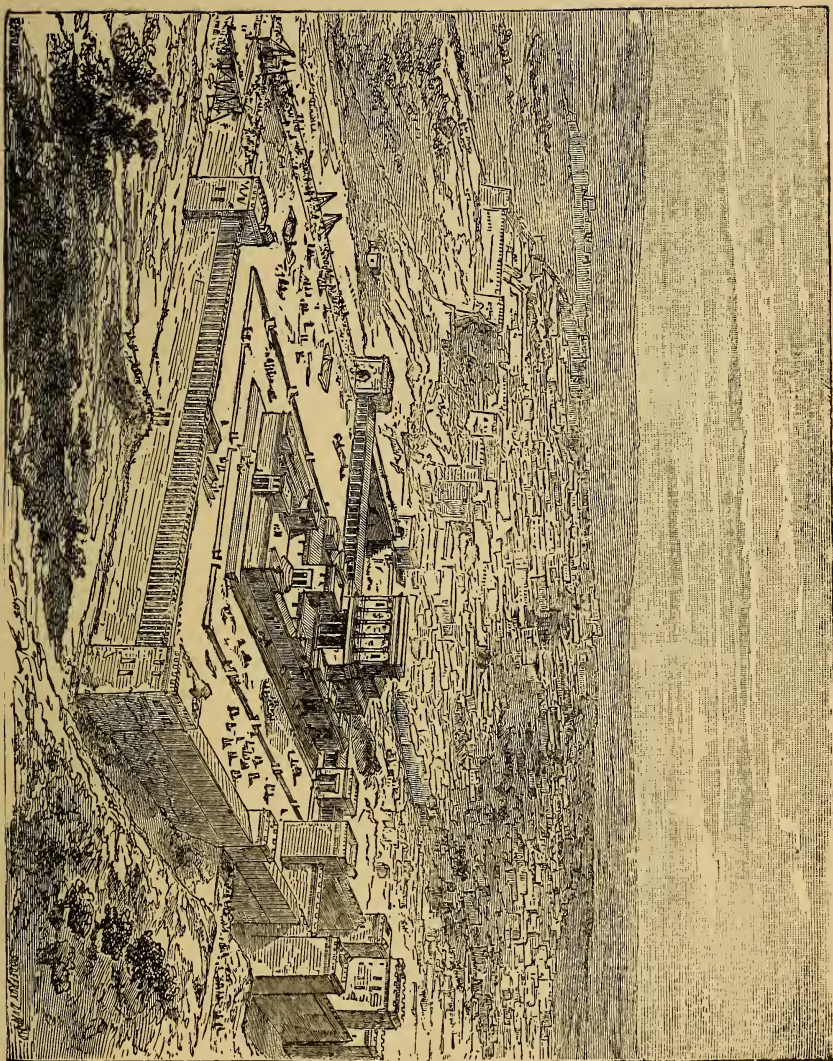


CHAPTER LII.

THE WATER OF LIFE.

THERE was a great feast at Jerusalem that lasted eight days. It was called the Feast of Tabernacles; it was held every year, and while it lasted the people lived in little booths of green branches, which they made by the side of the streets, in the gardens, on the flat roofs of the houses, and outside the city walls. This was to help them remember the years when Moses led them away from Egypt through the wilderness; when they had no houses to live in, and when God sent them manna to eat, and made cool water flow out of the rock for them to drink. Every day the people went up to the temple to hear the priests read the story of that journey and to give thanks that now God had brought them to live in a pleasant country and given them homes and gardens and vineyards. Each morning the priest took a golden pitcher, went out to the fountain of Siloam, filled it with the pure water, and brought it back to the temple. Then while the singers sang the story of the water that flowed from the rock for the thirsty people the priest poured out the water, and all the people shouted and clapped their hands for joy. But even among those who shouted and rejoiced there were some that were sick and some that were in trouble, people whose hearts were sorrowful because of sin, and who did not know how to get rid of it. They came to the feasts, and brought sacrifices, and listened to the priests

THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM.



and saw the water poured out, and then they went away and were no better than they were before. It was just as if they drank water and then went out in the hot desert and in a few minutes were thirsty again. Some day, the priests said, God would pour his Spirit upon his people and make them wise and holy and happy; but they could not tell when it would be, and most of them did not think or care anything about it.

But one day Jesus suddenly appeared among them. He went up to the temple and taught the people; he went about healing the sick and doing such miracles that many believed on him, and the Pharisees who hated him sent some officers to watch for a chance to take him. On the last day of the feast, the greatest day of all, Jesus stood up before the crowd that filled the temple and the court about it and called aloud, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Wonderful words for a teacher to speak! The people came closer about him; the lame and the sick and the poor and the sorrowful listened eagerly while this teacher went on to explain to them that they need not wait for that Spirit which was like living water. He told them that he had come into the world on purpose that all who believed on him might receive this blessed Spirit, which would be like a living fountain springing up in every heart.

The story does not tell us all that he said, only what he talked to them about; but some of the people who listened said: "This is a wonderful teacher; no one ever taught us like this, and what he says is all true. Surely this must be the great prophet that Moses said would some day come to teach us." Some others said: "He is more than a prophet; he is the great king who is going to rule over us and conquer all our enemies."

And then there were some who did not believe on him at all ; so there was a great deal of talking and disputing among them. Some of them even wanted to seize him and take him away to the chief priests and the Pharisees to be punished. But when they looked at Jesus and listened to his words, when they saw him laying his hands on the sick and healing them, touching the blind eyes and giving them sight, and saying to the lame, " Rise up and walk," no one dared to touch him. Something held back their hands and made them afraid. Even the officers whom the chief priests and the Pharisees had sent to seize him came back and stood in the council room without any prisoner. The Pharisees looked at them in surprise and asked, " Why have you not brought him ? " and the officers answered, " Never man spake like this man."

That was true. No one but Jesus ever said, " Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No one but Jesus ever said, " I am the light of the world ; " " I am the bread of life ; " " I am the Son of God ; " " I am the good shepherd ; I lay down my life for the sheep ; " " I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." No one but Jesus ever promised to give us peace and gladness and comfort in spite of any trouble that might come upon us. No one else ever promised that he would keep safely everyone who trusted in him, and that to the end of the world he would be with all his children, ready to hear every word and help every minute. No one else ever promised that even our sorrow should be turned into joy, and that some day all who love and serve him here shall be with him in the home he has prepared for us. No one but Jesus has spoken such

words as these, for no one else can do such wonderful things for us.

When these officers said, "Never man spake like this man," there was one among the rulers who knew in his heart how true that was. This was Nicodemus, who had the talk with Jesus one night. He remembered what wonderful words Jesus had said to him, and when the Pharisees spoke angrily to the officers because they had listened to Jesus, Nicodemus said: "Hadh't you better go and hear him yourselves before you make up your mind? Our law says you must not judge any man till you hear what he has to say." But this only made them more angry still and more determined to kill Jesus.



CHAPTER LIII.

TRUST IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

SERVING. We know what Jesus said about *pretending*, pretending to be kind and good and generous, so that people might praise you, pretending to pray and praise and serve God, not being simple and true and honest in all you did. That was not all he said. When he had told his disciples what they ought to *be* he went on to tell them what they ought to *do* and what they ought to *choose*. The best thing to choose was not riches, but the love and favor of God; and they could not have this favor unless they made it the business of their lives to serve God.

A servant must never have anything more important to do than serving his master; a child must never have anything more important to do than pleasing his father, he must never be too busy to hear his voice and listen to his commands.

“No man can serve two masters.” To serve in the way that Jesus meant is to belong to anyone. We cannot belong to God and belong to Satan at the same time. We cannot help choosing which we will obey, for we cannot serve both together. Perhaps we do not mean to take Satan for a master, but we wish to serve ourselves. We want to be rich, to get a great deal of money and have a great many pleasant things about us. It is not wrong to wish to have money and all the pleasant things that money can buy; but if that is what we

want most and think of most and try the hardest to get, we are making it our master and serving it.

But people must have food and clothing and many things every day. Jesus did not forget this, but he bade his disciples give their whole love and service to their Father and then trust his care without being worried or troubled. He bade them remember how many great things their Father had done for them. He made their bodies, so wonderfully and skillfully formed, and he filled them with life. He kept their hearts beating and the blood flowing, he made them so that the broken bones would grow together and the wounded flesh heal, so that the little helpless baby would grow up to a strong, active man. Surely he would take care that this wonderful body had what it needed, food and raiment and daily care.

Jesus always taught his disciples to look about them and see what their Father meant to teach them by the birds and the flowers and the trees. Now he said, "Behold the fowls of the air." God feeds them; they do not lie awake and worry about breakfast; they go and gather day by day their daily food. They live as God made them live, and are happy and contented. Are you not much better than they?

He told them to look at the lilies, the great splendid blossoms that grew in the fields of that country, and think who gave them their beautiful array that was finer than even King Solomon had in all his glory. He told them to see how God had clothed even the grass of the field, that was green and beautiful one day and the next day was cast into the oven and burned. This was not what we call grass, but a pretty little shrub with leaves and stems full of a resinous gum and all covered with

delicate blossoms of pink or blue or yellow. The women and children of Palestine gather it every day in great bundles and carry it to the ovens. They let it lie and wither until the morrow, and then it makes a hot, fierce fire to bake their bread. No doubt there were many women listening to Jesus who that very day had been gathering the grass for their ovens, and surely none of them would ever do it again without remembering that he had said of their Father, "Shall he not much more clothe you?"

How shall we leave off being troubled and worried about things? First, by telling our Father all about it; next, by trusting him to give us just what is best for us, and then by trying with all our hearts to be just what our Father wants us to be; by making it our first business to please him and to be good and pure and right in all our ways; and then we may be sure we shall never want any good thing. You little children do not say when you sit down to dinner, "I wonder if we shall have any dinner to-morrow?" You just leave everything to your kind parents and feel sure they'll take care of you, so you sing and laugh and are happy. Just in that way God tells his children to cast all their care upon him, because he cares for them, only to try to please him by being good.

The things of this world are not the best things. Those who do not know our Father, who do not understand his love, may seek for happiness in eating and drinking and thinking only of themselves; but you should know better. You are to seek better things, the things of God's kingdom; to be like your Father; to bring others to know him. The son who is going to his father's house and has his father's business to attend to by the way must eat and drink and sleep as he goes;

but he does not give his thought to this; he seeks his father's house, he thinks of his father's business, he is anxious only to please and satisfy his father.

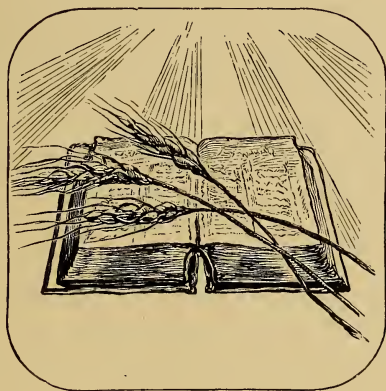
You need not be afraid that you will lack your daily bread. You are to ask for it day by day and then do your part to gather it, just as the busy ravens do; you are to be neither anxious nor idle. And you need not fear that you will fail of the best things, the kingdom that you are bidden to seek; for your Father delights to satisfy those that hunger and thirst after righteousness; it is his good pleasure to give you the bread of life and the garments of salvation. These are the things of which it is said, "Everyone that seeketh findeth; and he that asketh receiveth."

Do not wait until you have more than you want; divide what you have now, share with those who need. Instead of heaping up, give; instead of laying away your money and your property to be wasted or useless or scattered by accident, use it for others, use it for God, and instead of more earthly riches you will have heavenly riches that no one can take from you. You will be rich toward God because you will be like him in character; and instead of wasting away these riches will continually increase; instead of leaving them behind you when you leave this life they will fit you to enter upon and enjoy the life of heaven.

Seeking this treasure you will find continually greater delight in loving and giving and living for others, selfishness will be overcome, your thoughts will be about God and his kingdom and your hearts filled with eager desire for it.

Therefore fear not, little flock, trust for to-day and to-morrow. Your Father knows your needs; you are

precious to him ; he delights to give to you ; do not strive for earthly riches ; seek the best things, the things of his kingdom, to be like him in character. Give freely, share with others ; what you give will come back to you in more precious riches.



CHAPTER LIV.

JESUS HONORED.

JESUS did not stay in Bethany after he raised Lazarus from the dead. He went away again to his work, for now his life on earth was almost done. But just about a week before his crucifixion he came back once more to spend a little time with these gentle, loving friends. Pilgrims from all parts of the land were going up to Jerusalem to the great Feast of the Passover, and Jesus and his disciples traveled with them as far as Bethany. There they stopped to spend a quiet Sabbath, and no doubt Jesus told Mary and Martha and Lazarus, just as he had told his disciples, that the time of his death was at hand. There was another home in Bethany where Jesus was loved and honored, and this was the home of Simon. He is called Simon the leper, and Jesus had probably cured him of his dreadful disease. He wanted to honor his friend, so he made a feast for Jesus and his disciples. Lazarus was invited also, and Mary and Martha, and many others.

The way in which Martha always chose to show her love for her dear Lord was by serving him and trying to do something for his comfort. It made her happy to wait upon him and show her loving heart by loving deeds. She was glad also to wait upon the friends of Jesus for his sake; so at this feast, while Lazarus sat at the table as a guest, Martha served them, bringing food and pouring water upon their hands and showing

that she was glad and proud to be even a servant to the Lord whom she loved.

What could Mary do to honor Jesus? She brought an alabaster box of rare and costly ointment, such as was used for pouring over the heads of kings as a mark of great honor. People in that country reclined upon couches when they ate, and she could not pour the perfume upon the head of Jesus as he reclined at the table, but she came behind him and poured it upon the feet that had traveled so many weary miles as the blessed Master went about doing good. The sweet odor filled all the house, and everyone wondered why such a costly thing should all be poured out upon the feet of anyone.

One of the guests was very much displeased, and said it was a great waste. Not Simon, who had been healed of his dreadful leprosy by this dear guest who sat at his table; not Lazarus or Martha—they would think nothing too precious for the Friend who was to them above all kings; not the Lord Jesus himself, for he smiled upon Mary and said she had done a beautiful deed that should always be remembered of her. He told them he was soon going away; that they should not have him with them always or have any chance to show him honor; that his death was so near that Mary's sweet perfume was like anointing his body for the burial.

The guest who was displeased was Judas, one of the disciples who went about with Jesus and pretended to love him. Already he had let Satan come into his heart and had begun to obey him and be his servant. He carried the bag in which the money was kept, and he was a thief and stole the money from it. He said it would have been better to sell the ointment for fifty dollars and give the money to the poor; but Jesus knew

he did not really care for the poor. He knew that even then Satan had put into his heart the dreadful plan of getting money from the Jews by betraying his Lord.

The next day Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding on a young ass. The people took palm branches in their hands and went out to meet him, shouting and singing, as they would before a king, and all the multitude going before and following after shouted, "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

There were children among this singing multitude singing praises to the Friend who had taken children in his arms and said, "Suffer the children to come unto me." The children kept on singing, even after they came to the temple, and the chief priests were very much displeased when they heard it. They wanted Jesus to tell them to stop, but the Lord loved to hear their songs. He said God had filled their hearts with love and taught their lips to sing his praise. I think the honor he cared most for was the loving deed of Mary and the happy songs of the children, even more than the humble service of Martha or the feast of Simon or the praises of the multitude. But no loving deed or word or thought was ever overlooked or forgotten by him; no loving deed or word or thought is ever unnoticed now. He himself has told how we can best serve and honor him by caring for his poor and needy; for we always have them about us. When we sing "Hosanna," that is one kind of honor, but when we feed the hungry and care for the sick and suffering and try to teach others to love God we are doing the very work which Jesus did, and honoring him by *obeying* him; so he need not say to us, as he did to some, "Why do you call me Lord, and do not the things I command you?"



THE CHILDREN'S PRAISE.

CHAPTER LV.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

A GREAT company of travelers were on their way to Jerusalem. They did not go by railroad or in carriages, but walked along the pleasant roads together, talking as they traveled and stopping to eat or rest under the palm trees and by the streams of water. As they went on little companies of two or three, and sometimes larger bands, joined them from the villages and cities, for it was almost time for the great Feast of the Passover, when the people went up to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. The people of that country began their year in the spring, and this was the first month, when the barley was ready to harvest and the wheat was just beginning to ripen.

The Lord Jesus and his disciples were with the company of travelers, and so was the blind man Bartimeus, whose eyes Jesus had opened, and perhaps many others who had been healed; for John tells us that only a few of the things that Jesus did were ever written down. The Jews used to sing psalms of rejoicing as they went up to Jerusalem, but I do not think the twelve disciples felt like singing. They were troubled and afraid, for Jesus had told them, as they were on the way, what he had told them before, that at Jerusalem he was to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and they should mock him, and scourge him, and spit upon him, and kill him; and, although he said also that on the third day he

"And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way."

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.



should rise again, they were too sorrowful and full of fear to think much about that.

When they were a little way from the city they stopped awhile near the little village of Bethphage, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Was Jesus going to wait there and let the great company go on, so that he might go in quietly and not be noticed? No; Jesus was not going into the city as a poor traveler, unnoticed among the crowds. He was going to enter like a king and a conqueror taking possession of his kingdom. Earthly kings often gain their kingdoms by putting thousands of people to death or making slaves of them, but Jesus was going to take his kingdom by giving up his own life to give life to others and setting free the slaves of sin. Sometimes he had bidden his disciples not to tell of his wonderful works, because the time had not yet come, and he could not be hindered; but now the time had come, and he wished everyone to know that he was the King of Israel, and that he gave up his life freely, to finish his work.

Jesus called two of his disciples and bade them go over to the village and bring a young colt which they would find tied at the door of a house just as they entered the city. And if any man asked them why they were loosing the colt they were to say, "The Lord hath need of him." The disciples did as they were bidden. They found the colt tied at the door, they loosed him, and when some one asked, "What are you doing?" they said, "The Lord hath need of him," and they let them go.

They brought the colt to Jesus and spread their garments upon him, and Jesus sat upon him. As he rode on many spread their garments in the path and cut down green branches and strewed them in the way, as they

used to do before their kings; and all the multitude, some going before and some coming after, sang and shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom that cometh! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!" So the whole multitude went on, shouting, and when the news reached the city that Jesus was coming the people took palms and went to meet him, singing, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Moreover, Matthew remembered to tell us that there were children crying "Hosanna," and they followed on even into the temple and sang their praises there, while the blind and the lame gathered about Jesus to be healed.

Do you think among so many voices Jesus would hear the praises of the children? Yes; for even the chief priests and the scribes heard them in the temple, and were very much displeased by it. They wanted Jesus to stop them, but he said, "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" As if he meant to say, "The children's praise is the best of all; they really love me, and love is what I want. They are ready to be taught and to obey; of such is the kingdom of heaven, and not of men like you scribes, or of people who only shout because they hope I am going to set up a splendid court like Solomon's and give them some place of honor."

Are you not glad that Matthew remembered to mention the children and to tell us that Jesus commended their praise? For as he was pleased to hear their voices then; so he loves to hear them now, and amid all the songs that go up to him from men and from angels he never loses the sound of the weakest voice, or even of a loving heart that says, without any sound at all, "Blessed Lord Jesus!"

CHAPTER LVI.

UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS.

THE priests were men whose business it was to teach the people about God and how to serve and please him. They were God's servants, and their work was to help the people to do right. But in the days of our Lord Jesus they had become proud and wicked, and cared for nothing but to be honored and obeyed by others. They were not willing to be taught, and they hated Jesus because the people listened to him rather than to them.

They were determined to kill Jesus, but they meant to do it in such a way that it should look as if they were only anxious to serve God. They kept watch of Jesus when he was teaching; they sent cunning men to ask him questions, and tried to find something in his words or deeds for which they might accuse him. But even the Roman soldiers whom they sent came back and declared they could not arrest him, because never man spake as he did; and day after day they grew more determined in their hatred as they saw that Jesus was winning the hearts of the people and showing them that the teaching of the priests was not safe to follow.

One day, when they had been questioning Jesus, he told them a story, called a parable, to show them that they were like wicked and unfaithful servants who did not do the work their masters had given them, and were unwilling that anyone else should do it. It was the story of a man who took great pains to prepare his vine-

yard by planting the vines, and inclosing it with a hedge, and digging a pit for the wine press and a tower for the watchman, and then gave it into the care of some husbandmen to manage for him while he went away to a far country. But when, by and by, it was time for fruit and he sent a servant for it the wicked men caught him and beat him, and sent him away without anything. The master of the vineyard was very patient with them and sent a great many times, but some of his servants they beat and some they even killed, but they would not give any share of the fruits of the vineyard to the owner. By and by the master, who had one beloved son, sent him, saying, "They will reverence my son." But when they saw him they said, "Come, let us kill him, and then the vineyard will be ours." So they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

How do you think these wicked priests felt in their hearts when Jesus looked at them and asked, "What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?" No one answered him, and Jesus said, "He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others."

The priests and the scribes and the Pharisees understood the parable, and so did the people. They knew that instead of taking care of the Lord's vineyard for him they had thought only of themselves; they had turned away his messengers, and now that he had sent his only Son they were planning to kill him. They saw that Jesus meant them, and they would have killed him that minute if they had dared, but they were afraid that the people would take his part, so they waited a little longer.

The parable has a meaning for us as well as for the

unfaithful priests. We are all God's servants, and he has given each one of us a vineyard to take care of for him. He has done a great deal to prepare it for us by giving us his Holy Spirit to enlighten us, his word to instruct and guide us, parents and friends and teachers to counsel us, churches and Sunday schools and Sabbath days that are like a hedge about the vineyard to keep out evil. And then he sends his messengers to ask if we have any fruit for him. Have we anything to give him, or do we think only about ourselves, live for ourselves, work for ourselves, and quite forget that our vineyard belongs to God and he has set us to keep it?

The poor and the needy are God's messengers, and he sends them in his name for his share of our fruits. The heathen and the ignorant, in this land and in other lands, are God's messengers, and a share belongs to them. Our money, our strength, our time, our wisdom, all come to us from God, and he asks a part of all.

The best thing we can have to render to God from our vineyards is hearty love and glad service; for he sends to us, as he did to the unfaithful servants, his well-beloved Son. He says, "This vineyard belongs to me; give it to me and I will bless it and teach you how to keep it that it may bear much fruit." Shall we give the vineyard into his hands? Shall we ask him to take us and all we have, and teach us to be his loving servants, doing everything for him, happy in his help and presence here, and looking forward without fear to the day when we shall give account to him for all with which he has intrusted us?

CHAPTER LVII.

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

IN those days when our Lord Jesus was in Jerusalem and crowds of people were listening to his teachings, the chief priests and the scribes were watching and waiting in the hope that he would say something which would give them an excuse for seizing him and putting him to death. They asked him all sorts of questions to see if they could not get him to say something contrary to what Moses had taught, and to the things that were written in the law of God; but his answers were always so true and wise that the people could see that Jesus really knew much more about the law of God than their teachers did, and cared more to have men obey it. One day, when they had tried in vain to catch him in his words, one of the scribes who was listening could not help wondering at the wisdom with which Jesus answered all their questions. He thought he would ask one himself, so he said, "Which is the first commandment of all?" He meant by this, "Which is the greatest and most important commandment for men to obey?"

The scribes spent a great deal of time in disputing together about the commandments, trying to prove which one was the most important, and which one it was most sinful to break. They taught the people exactly what they might do on the Sabbath day, and just what taking God's name in vain meant, but they never taught them that the only obedience God cares for is that we should

keep his commandments because in our hearts we love him and wish to please him.

Jesus did not say a word about what their wise men and great teachers had written and said of the commandments. He said, "The first of all the commandments is, The Lord our God is one God; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

There are two reasons why this is the first commandment. It is first because it is *most important*. What God wants of us is love and a desire above all things to please him. A child may be very careful to obey the actual commands that his father has given him, and yet do things that grieve him. The father may say, "My son, it is true that I have never forbidden you to do this thing, but if you truly loved and honored me you would have felt that it would not be pleasing to me, and love would have been as powerful as a command." And another child may do something through ignorance or thoughtlessness which makes the father great trouble, and yet he may say, "I am sorry you did this; you should have stopped to consider, or have asked me about it; but I know you truly love me and really desire to please me, and the next time you will be wiser."

The first child is disobedient in spirit, and the second is not, and we know very well with which the father is best pleased. So it is with our Father in heaven. What he cares for is our love and confidence and trust, and no outward obedience is worth anything compared with this.

And then it is first because *it must come first*. We cannot obey until we love. We cannot serve until we love. The first thing God asks of us is love, and until

we have given that we have not entered his service at all: we cannot understand him or his wishes for us; it is impossible to please him.

The scribe only asked for the greatest commandment, but Jesus told him that there was another that in its spirit was like the first and must come next, and that was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

We must begin by loving God with all the heart, and that love will take selfishness out of us, because when we are filled with love there will be no room for selfishness, no room for anything displeasing to God. Our love for God will make us wish to be like him; it will make us continually grow more like him, so that we shall feel toward others more and more as he feels. A child may not understand all his father's plans, but if there is love and trust and confidence and sympathy between them, if they talk together and work together, the child will grow more like the father, be better able to enter into his wishes and carry out his plans.

So if we love our heavenly Father we shall have his spirit dwelling in us: he is love, we shall be love also. We shall keep the two great commandments, and that is the only possible way to keep the rest. Even the scribe saw this. He said to Jesus, "Thou hast answered well," and Jesus told him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God;" but we do not know whether he ever really entered the kingdom by accepting the teaching of Jesus like a little child. We may be very near the kingdom of God, and yet not enter in because we are not quite ready to say:

"Take my heart, it is thine own,
It shall be thy royal throne;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee."

CHAPTER LVIII.

OUR LORD'S LAST LESSON.

THE night before Jesus was crucified was the night on which, in every home in Jerusalem, families and friends gathered about the table to eat the passover supper in memory of the time when the Lord smote all the first-born in Egypt, but passed over the homes of the Israelites who had marked the posts of the door with the blood of a lamb.

The lamb whose blood saved them from death was a type of that Lamb of God by whose blood their souls were to be redeemed, and he was now ready to be offered. This last night Jesus wished to be alone with his disciples, to give them his last messages of love and promise, to speak to them his last words that they might never forget, and to commend them for the last time to the keeping of his Father.

He sent Peter and John to Jerusalem to prepare for the passover supper in the house of a man who was probably a friend, and at the usual time, which was after sunset, they all gathered in the upper room where the table was spread. There were no servants to wait upon them and wash their dusty feet, and none of them seem to have been willing to do this humble service for the others. While the heart of their Master was full of love for them all, even for Judas, who had promised to betray him, they were disputing about who should have the most honorable place and be served instead of serving.

Jesus knew it all, but nothing made his love less tender. John says, "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." He told them how much he had desired to eat this supper with them before he suffered, and as they ate and drank together he told them that he should never again share it with them on earth.

He talked to them of his going away, and assured them that he would not leave them comfortless. He bade them love one another as he had loved them, and he gave them a lesson that they must always remember by doing for them what they were not willing to do for each other. He rose from the table, took a towel and basin and washed their feet and bade them remember that he, their Lord and Master, had been ready to do the humblest service for them, and so they should also be ready to serve one another. He said, "Blessed are ye if ye do these things," using just the same word about such common small things as washing dusty feet that he did when he said, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

Don't you think the disciples must have been ashamed to remember how unwilling they had been to serve each other when they saw that their Lord was ready to do the humblest work to serve them? They understood, too, that he did not mean to teach them just to wash each other's feet when it was needful, but to be ready to serve each other in any way. The thing that makes service easy and delightful is love. Mothers forget all about tired feet and tired hands when they are serving the children they love. God gave his beloved Son to suffer and die for us because he loved us so. The first lesson for us to learn from the example which Jesus has given us is the lesson of love like his to all the world.

Next is the lesson of humility, not to strive to be greatest and try to set ourselves up above others, but to imitate our Lord, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, who took upon himself the form of a servant, and though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, so that we, through his poverty, might be rich.

Next the lesson of service, but service and humility are sure to follow love. He who loves wishes to serve; he who loves forgets himself, and John, who was close to his Master at that supper, and perhaps understood him best, wrot eafterward, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

Did you ever think that by the little helpful things that you can do every day in your homes you can obey one of the very last commands of Jesus, and do what he took so much pains to teach his disciples? For when he bade them wash each other's feet he meant, be willing to do any service for the help and comfort of each other, and this is his command just as much as the one that bade them go and preach the Gospel.

Remember it when you have tiresome work to do and would rather play, when you are impatient at having to wait upon others, when you are asked to do what you think somebody else might do. Think that Jesus is saying, "I have given you an example, I am your Lord, but I was not ashamed to serve. Can you not do what I did?" And then remember that Jesus said of these little humble services, "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them."

Just think that those who wash tired feet and help tired hands and tired eyes and bring a cup of cold water and speak a kind word or smooth away trouble are called blessed, the same as the peacemakers and the pure in heart! Has Jesus said to you to-day, "Blessed are ye?"

CHAPTER LIX.

A PRECIOUS PRAYER.

AND now the last words are spoken ; in a little while the soldiers will come to take Jesus away. He cannot teach or advise or comfort his disciples any more, but before he leaves them he prays for them. He did not kneel down ; John says he lifted up his eyes to heaven. He began by saying, " Father," just as if he saw God and was talking to him about the dear ones whom he loved so much.

1. " Keep them from the evil."

He asked God to keep them. All the years that Jesus had been with them he had cared for them and kept them, and taught them to trust their Father's love ; but now he was going away, and these disciples would have sorrow and temptation and trial. Satan would tempt them, and bad men would tempt them, and those who hated Jesus would hate his servants also. Who could keep them from the evil that would be all about them ? Only their Father in heaven. Would he keep them from trouble and danger ? Not always. He did not keep Daniel and David from all trouble, but he made them brave and strong and loving enough to do right in spite of danger. It is good for God's soldiers to fight against evil if they remember to pray as Jesus taught them, " Deliver us from evil," for only our Father can deliver us and keep us.

2. " Sanctify them through thy truth."

It is not enough just to keep from doing what God forbids. God wants to fill our hearts so full of love that we shall delight to please him and do his will because we love to do it. Jesus prayed that God would teach these disciples by his word so that they would receive his truth into their hearts, and love and obey it. So, day by day, their lives would grow better and brighter and more beautiful, and they should be safe from evil without and evil within.

3. A prayer for us. "Neither pray I for these alone."

If Jesus had said at the very end of his prayer that it was not alone for the disciples that were there with him, but for everybody who should learn to love him, it surely would have made us glad. But he did not wait until he came to the end. Right here in the midst of the praying he stops to say that he is praying for all that shall believe on him, as long as his word is preached. And then he asks for us, for you and for me, some of the most beautiful and precious things in all the prayer.

4. "That they all may be one."

He asks that his children may love each other and love God so that they may be like one family, with one Father and one elder Brother, Jesus Christ; Jesus dwelling in our hearts, and our Father loving us as he loves his only Son, our Saviour. When Jesus prayed that all his children might be one he meant that they should all love him so much that they should want just what he wanted. His love joins people together and joins them to him, just as if I should take one child by my right hand and one by my left, and hold you both fast; you would be joined together and joined to me. Is it not wonderful that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will

take us, too, into his love, and, because Jesus loves us, gather us all into his arms together? Jesus says, "My Father, these are mine, and all mine are thine. Keep them from evil; make them clean by thy word; let them all be one, loving thee and loving one another; let all the world see that thou lovest them as thou hast loved me."

5. "That they may be with me; that they may behold my glory."

If we have this love in our hearts we shall live with God even in this life; he will hold us fast, so that Satan may not get us; he will speak to us, and we shall speak to him, and know that he is smiling on us; we shall be children of the light, and have peace and joy in our Father which nothing can take from us. But that is not all. Jesus prayed that by and by, when we have done living in our bodies, we should come and be with him, and share the glory of his heavenly home. So you see we may have Jesus with us here and always; he will share everything that comes to his children, whether it be joy or sorrow, and they shall share with him in his kingdom.

When Jesus was on the cross he prayed for his enemies, but this precious, loving prayer was just for his children, for those who know and obey him. To-day in heaven he still prays for us; we may go to him this moment and say, "Dear Lord, who died for me, take me, pray for me, teach me how to serve thee." And Jesus will say, just as he said of Peter and John and Mark, "These are mine, and all mine are thine. Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me."

CHAPTER LX.

OUR PLACE IN HEAVEN.

IF a company of little children were on a journey with their father through a strange country, where they had no houses to live in, but slept in tents or caves, or wherever they could find shelter, they might feel quite safe and contented so long as their father was with them. But if the father were going on before, to leave them to finish their journey alone, they would surely be troubled, and think of all the things that might happen to them on the way. Think how they would gather about their father before he bade them good-bye, and ask what they should do if they got into any trouble or felt sick or lonesome, and how they could be sure of finding the way home. No matter how strong and wise and loving the father might be, he could not say to his little flock, as Jesus did when he went away, "Do not be afraid, little children; though you cannot see me, I shall always be with you, and nothing can harm you; you can always speak to me, and I shall hear and answer; I will tell you where to go and what to do, and whatever you ask for I will give you, unless it is something that would not be best for you."

If the father could do all this for his children, they would not be afraid to have him leave them even in a desert where there were wild beasts and cruel enemies. When our Lord Jesus spoke his last comforting words to his disciples before he went away, he knew how lonely

they would be, with enemies all about them, with no homes to live in, and their dear Master gone from them to heaven. So he said to them, "Fear not, little flock; let not your heart be troubled : trust in me ; I will take care of you."

Let us try to think about them in that chamber having their last talk with Jesus, just as if we were there too, looking in his face and hearing his words—for he thought about us when he said, "Let not your heart be troubled." If any little child had been there, Jesus would have put his arm about it and drawn it close up to him while he talked, and told *why* he was going, and *where* he was going, and how all who loved him might come and be with him.

We know where he was going : he was going back to our Father's house in heaven, where he lived before he came to earth ; but now hear what he says about that beautiful home. He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions." A mansion means an abiding place, a home to stay in always ; for when we go to our Father's house we shall never need to go away again. It would be very hard to go and stay a little while in a beautiful palace, wearing royal robes, fed with dainty food, hearing delicious music, surrounded by everyone whom we loved, and so happy there was not a thing to trouble us, and then go back to be poor and sick and homeless and alone. So Jesus wants us to remember that our heavenly home is the home from which we never go away.

No matter how large our homes on earth are, there cannot be room for everyone ; but Jesus says in our Father's house there will be so many mansions that everyone may have a place. For just as the mother knows everyone of her children, and never forgets to

care for each one, so our Father sees and knows every child of his, and makes room for everyone in his home.

But there is something more wonderful still about our home in heaven. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you;" so when we come we shall find that for everyone a special place has been prepared—just such a place as will suit us best. We do not know what heaven will be like, or whether we shall all want the same things, but we do know that our Father will give just what will make us happiest, and we shall find everything ready for us.

Sometimes when a house on earth has been made ready for a dear child who is expected home, and everyone is waiting to welcome him back, he does not come, and the father and mother wait and watch and grow sad and heart-broken. Would it not be a sorrowful thing if those for whom Jesus has prepared places in heaven should never find the way to their home? How can they be sure to find the way? Jesus thought of that. He said he would come again and bring us, so that we might be with him. He said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life!*" He puts into our hearts the new life that makes us children of the light; he teaches us all things that we need to know, and leads us so gently that we need never miss the way if we follow him. Though we cannot see him, we can speak to him and be sure that he does come to every one of us. When we are sorry because we have done wrong, if we speak to him, we may be sure he says to us, "Let not your heart be troubled; trust in me; I am the way, I will lead you; I am the truth, I will teach you; I am the life, I will never leave you; I have prepared a place for you, I will come and receive you."

CHAPTER LXI.

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE.

WE have talked of some of the things that our Lord said at that last passover supper, but there are many more precious words spoken to the disciples he called his own, but spoken also for us. Although Jesus had heard them disputing among themselves who should be accounted the greatest, he did not openly rebuke them. It seems as if his heart was so full of tenderness that he could not bear to do it; but after giving them a lesson by doing for them what they were not willing to do for each other, he told them in a very gentle way how they should seek for greatness, and what they should count the highest place. He told them that in his kingdom the one who was humblest should be the greatest; that the chief honor was to be in serving others, and not in being served; because those who so lived and loved and humbled themselves for love's sake were most like Christ, who had set them the example of such a life.

The disciples might well have been ashamed of their foolish disputes and their unwillingness to serve. No doubt some of them thought, "He will think we do not love him at all, that we are selfish and ambitious and only think of ourselves." But Jesus knew their hearts; he knew they did love him. He said in his prayer, "These are thine; they have kept thy word, I am glorified in them;" and now, after his words of gentle reproof and instruction, he adds, "Ye are they which

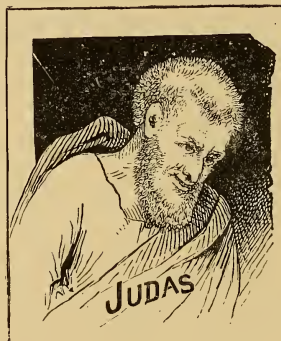
have continued with me in my temptations." In spite of all their faults and imperfections they had been ready to meet trial and danger with their Master, they had forsaken all to follow him, and he left them this comforting assurance, that their faithfulness was precious to him. So no disciple who truly loves his Lord need be discouraged over his own failures and imperfections or feel that he is of no use to his Master. The most precious thing in the world is love and sympathy, and where we are sure of this we can overlook the mistakes our friends make in trying to serve us. We say sometimes of a child, "He means well, but he forgets; he means well, but he does not understand;" and so we have patience and go on teaching, training, forgiving, and always loving, never saying harsh or unkind or discouraging things, but helping the child to be what we wish him to be. Just so our Father accepts and loves and encourages his children.

Sometimes in a pleasant, comfortable home, when the family are gathered about the table, the face of the father is sad, and he sighs as he looks at his children. If he should tell you what it is that troubles him he would say that it was because some of his children had done wrong, because they were not honest and obedient and loving, and he was afraid they were not growing up to be good men and women. Perhaps the children might seem to a stranger to be all right, they might be pleasant and bright and industrious, but the father who watched them every day could see that evil things were growing in their hearts and that they were listening to evil counselors and going in evil ways, and so his own heart would be greatly troubled, especially if he was going away to leave his children,

That is the way it was with our Lord Jesus when the last night of his life had come and he was at supper with his disciples, all alone in the upper chamber. He had just given them the beautiful lesson about serving each other, and now as they were still at the table he looked around at them all and his heart grew heavy with sorrow. None of them had *done* anything wrong, but Jesus Christ did not have to wait for *actions*. He could look into all their hearts and see the evil thought, he could look forward and see what was going to happen by and by, just as we can look back and see what happened yesterday. He looked into the heart of one of these disciples and saw that he had made up his mind to betray him into the hands of those who hated him; and he was so troubled that he could hardly speak to them about it. And then he looked into the heart of Peter, who really loved his Master dearly, and thought he would do anything for him, and saw that he was not brave enough to stand by him when trouble came, but was trusting in his own strength instead of God's help.

Our fathers and mothers are sorry for what we *do*, but Jesus is sorry for what we *are*. He was grieved that Judas should have a heart that could betray him, and Peter a heart that could deny him. When he turned to his disciples and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me," they just looked at each other and wondered, and Peter made a sign to John, who was nearest Jesus, to ask him which one it was. John was the one whom Jesus loved best, and he leaned back against Jesus's breast and asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Probably he whispered, and Jesus whispered back. He did not tell the name, but he gave him a sign by which he might know, and John saw that it was

Judas. Judas saw too that the Lord read his heart and knew all his base plannings to sell him to his enemies, and that he was just watching for a chance to fulfill his promise and get his money. Jesus said to him, "What thou doest, do quickly," and Judas did not need to ask, "What do you mean?" Perhaps for a minute he was ashamed before those loving, all-seeing eyes, but he gave himself up to Satan and Satan took possession of him. The Bible says, "Satan entered into him," as if this wicked spirit came to live in him and use his lips and his eyes and his feet and his hands. Satan said to Judas, "Come away from here, I want you." And Judas went out immediately to do Satan's work and be Satan's slave.



CHAPTER LXII.

THE COMFORTER, THE TEACHER, THE GUIDE.

THERE were a great many things that the Lord Jesus told his disciples which they could not understand. They did not understand what he meant when he talked of going away in a little while so that they would not see him. They were full of sorrow when he said he was going to leave them ; they did not understand what he meant by his Father's house and the many mansions he was going to prepare for them, or how, if he did really go away to heaven, he could come back to them and comfort them, as he promised he would do.

They looked at each other and said, "Where is he going? what does he mean? He says, 'A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me.' If he only would stay with us and teach us, that is all we want."

Jesus saw how sad and how troubled they were, and he cried, "Your hearts are full of sorrow because I have told you these things. You think only about my leaving you ; you do not think where I am going, and why I am going away. I am going away because it is best for you. When I am gone I will send the Comforter unto you, to be your teacher and guide."

Could anyone be better than Jesus? It must be so, for Jesus himself said it. If he were here with us to-day in his human body, as he was with his disciples, we could see him with our eyes and hear his words with our

ears ; but we cannot understand the things of God just by seeing and hearing. Our souls must be taught. God must speak to them and teach them by the voice which we call the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus meant by the Comforter. The disciples did not listen for that voice while they had Jesus, or perhaps they would not yet understand what the voice said to them, and so they had to wait until Jesus had gone away before they really understood what he had tried to teach them.

Jesus was God's voice speaking to men through human lips ; this Comforter is God's voice speaking to our souls without any human lips. Jesus could only speak to those that were right about him ; this Comforter can speak to every soul all over the world—to the poor people in India and China, who have no other teacher, and to you and me.

The disciples did not understand how much they needed teaching and guiding, but they knew they needed comforting if their dear Master was going away ; so the first thing which Jesus promised them was that he would send them a Comforter to turn their sorrow into joy. If you were crying because your father had left you alone in a strange place, and some one should be sent to you, the first thing to do would be to comfort you, to wipe away your tears, and say, " Don't cry, dear child ; your father has not forgotten you ; he has only gone a little way ; he will come presently and take you home with him." This is just what the precious Comforter which Jesus sent after he went away did for the disciples, and this is what he is doing this very day to comfort every one of us who looks to God in sorrow and trouble.

This Holy Spirit which Jesus promised to send was to be something more than just a comforter. He was to

be a teacher also. Jesus was a teacher, but we have seen that even the disciples who loved him best did not always understand what he taught them. But Jesus told them that after he was gone this heavenly Teacher, whom they could not see, would bring again to their remembrance all that he had said to them, and then they should understand. Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," but he promised them that this divine Teacher would make all things plain and clear. He would teach them all about Jesus, and help them to see how it was his glory and honor to lay down his life that he might save us. He would show them the wonderful things that were coming by and by when Jesus shall be King of earth and heaven, and his happy people shall be with him. These are only a few of the things, for Jesus said this Teacher should guide them into all truth, teach them all they needed to know about the way to heaven.

This Comforter, this Teacher, is also a sure Guide. Jesus said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." That must mean that if we really mean to follow Jesus he will make the way so clear and bright that we need not miss it. So, though he went away from his disciples and from us, it is just as if he stood at the door holding a light that we might see to come home; as if he sent a messenger to walk close before us and light every step; as if he put in our very hearts a light to make darkness bright about us. Let us thank him for this blessed Comforter, this divine Teacher, this sure Guide, and ask that he will teach us all we need to know and lead us to our Father's house.

CHAPTER LXIII.

JESUS BETRAYED.

I DO not like to talk to you about the rest of this story. You have heard it a great many times, and I am afraid some of you will listen without really feeling that you are speaking about the cruel and sorrowful death of your best and dearest Friend, who gladly bore all this suffering that he might show you how he loved you and persuade you to let him save you from your sins. Perhaps this very day you have sung the story, and while your lips were saying,

“I will sing of my Redeemer
And his wondrous love to me,”

you were looking about the room and thinking of something else. What if your own dear father had given himself up to be murdered by cruel robbers, so that his children might escape from them? And supposing I should come to you and say, “I was with your father that last night; we were out in the garden together. He knew they were going to torture and kill him, and he might have gone away safely, but he gave himself up just to save you. I will tell you what he said, and all about it.” Don’t you think you would listen to every word? The tears would run down your face, and your heart would almost break to hear about it. You would say, “My dear Father! how he must have loved me! If I could only see him I would never do a thing to grieve

him ; it would be dreadful that he should suffer such pain for nothing."

Will you try to think in this way while we talk about the night when the One who loves you dearest was betrayed into the hands of cruel murderers? John, who tells us the story, was with Jesus all the time. He tells us that Jesus loved his disciples so much that he did not think about his own death that was so soon coming, but kept on telling them not to be troubled, comforting and advising them, and at last praying for them with all the loving words and earnest pleading which we studied in our last lesson.

Now let John tell us how they all went away over the little brook Kedron, into a garden where they had often gone before. It was midnight, but the moon was full and bright, so it was light in the garden, except under the shadow of the great olive trees. The wicked Judas was not with the other disciples. He had gone to the chief priests, and taken the money they gave him, and now he was leading the band of soldiers and showing them the way to the garden. They had swords and spears, and they carried lanterns and torches, because they had to pass through a deep, dark ravine to get to the garden, or perhaps they thought Jesus would hide away in some cave among the rocks.

But Jesus did not hide. He knew all things that were coming to him. If he had wished he could have called down thousands of shining angels to guard him ; but he chose to die for you and me. He would rather suffer than that we should miss the way to our Father's arms.

The soldiers came nearer, and there among them was Judas. He came up to Jesus and kissed him as if he loved him ; but the kiss was only for a sign by which the



JESUS BETRAYED AND TAKEN.

"Then Jesus said unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath."

soldiers might know Jesus. They did not need any sign, for Jesus himself stepped forward to meet them, told them who he was, and asked them to take him if they chose, but to let his disciples go safely away.

When the soldiers first heard his voice telling them, "I am Jesus," their hearts were filled with a strange fear; they went backward and fell to the ground. But Jesus spoke again, so gently they came again toward him. Perhaps the priests who hated Jesus shamed them for being afraid, and the servant of the high priest pressed forward to be the first to lay his hand on him. Should you not think the disciples would have defended their Master? One of them tried to do so. Peter had a sword, and when he saw this servant of the high priest pressing forward so eagerly he drew out his sword and struck at him, but he struck so hastily that he only cut off his right ear.

Peter did not wait to ask Jesus what he wished him to do; but Jesus did not wish anyone to fight for him. He told Peter to put up his sword; he reached out his pitying hand and did one more act of mercy by touching the man's ear and healing it. Jesus said, "The cup my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He came into the world on purpose that he might bring us to God, and no suffering could make him turn back before the work was finished, and he could say, "See how God loved the world that he gave himself to save it."

The band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound him and led him away to the high priest's palace. All the disciples fled away excepting Peter and John. They followed after and came into the palace. John went in at once, because he was acquainted with the high priest; but Peter stood outside



PETER DENIES HIS LORD.
"And he denied, saying, I know him not."

until John remembered him, and met and spoke to the doorkeeper to let him in.

It was cold in the early morning, and they stood around a fire warming themselves and waiting to see what should be done with Jesus. Peter thought he was very brave, but this was the time when he became so frightened at the questions of those about him that he said he did not even know the Lord Jesus. Poor Peter! let us be sorry for him, for when the Lord just turned and looked at him his heart almost broke. He went out weeping bitterly, and feeling as if, whatever happened, Jesus would never love him again.

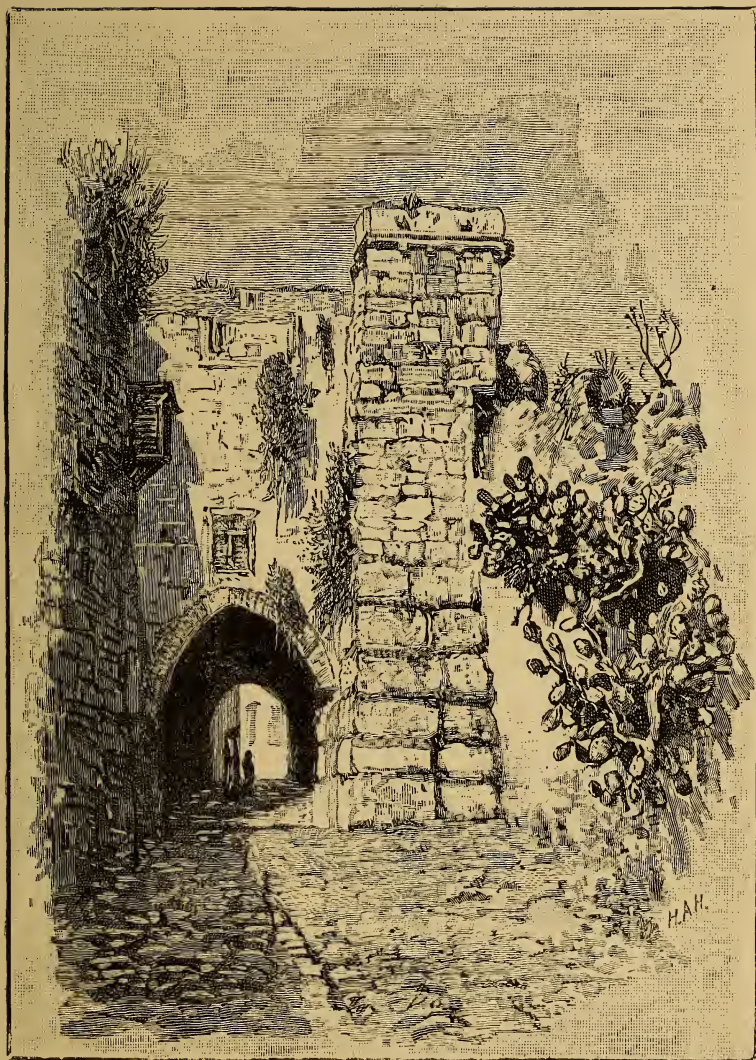


CHAPTER LXIV.

A CRUEL PEOPLE.

WE have learned how Judas helped the enemies of our Lord Jesus to seize him, that they might put him to death. The part of Judas seems to us the very worst and meanest of all. He did not hate Jesus; he lived with him and saw him every day, and knew how good and loving and holy he was, yet he was willing to help his enemies for the sake of a little money.

Now Judas has done his part, and the high priest has done his part. The soldiers took Jesus to the palace of the high priest first, who would have been glad to have him put to death at once. But the high priest himself, and all the Jewish people, had a ruler whom they had to obey, and that was Pilate, the Roman governor. The emperor of the Romans had conquered the Jews, so he sent a governor to rule them and made laws to say what they must do. One law was that they could not put anyone to death. If a man did anything very bad he must be tried before the Roman governor, and he could have him put to death if he deserved it. This would have been a very good law if the Roman governor had been a good man; but Pilate did not care about doing right; he wished only to please the people, so that they would not complain to the king and have him sent away or put in prison. So, when the high priest had asked Jesus a few questions and heard what the false witnesses had to say about him—when, in spite of his



ANCIENT BUILDING AT JERUSALEM CALLED "PILATE'S JUDGMENT HALL."

gentle words and wise answers, the cruel people about him had smitten him and spit upon him and abused him—the soldiers led him away from the palace to the judgment hall of the governor, to ask that he might be put to death.

The soldiers took Jesus into the room where Pilate was waiting, but the Jews themselves waited outside. They thought if they even touched one of the Roman people it would make them so impure they could not go to the temple to join in the great service of praise and thanksgiving that day at the Feast of the Passover. They did not understand that when God commanded that their bodies and their garments should be kept even from the touch of anything impure when they came into his house he only wished to help them remember how the touch of sin would make the heart impure, and that he would not accept their worship unless they turned away from all sin. While they were so careful to keep their bodies from being defiled their hearts, which were all open to the sight of God, were full of cruel hatred and eager for the murder of an innocent man. They were just as wrong and foolish as we are when we think we are good because we go to church, and read the Bible, and say our prayers, and yet do not really love God or love each other.

When Pilate saw the people waiting he went out into the court and talked to them. He asked them why they had brought Jesus there and why they did not punish him themselves; but when he found out they wanted him to be put to death he went back and called Jesus to him and began to talk to him. Pilate was not a good man, but he was not so cruel as some of the governors had been, who delighted to torture innocent peo-

ple and see them suffer. Pilate would rather do right when it was easy and pleasant, but he did not believe that the right way was always the best way, whether it was easy or hard. When he talked with Jesus he saw that he was not like anyone whom he ever met before. He asked him, "Are you a king?" and Jesus said, "Yes, I am a king, but my kingdom is not of this world; my servants do not fight for me. I came into this world to teach people the truth, and everyone whose heart is true will listen to my voice and obey me."

Pilate knew his heart was not true; he was not one of the children of truth; when God spoke to him he did not listen, but he felt sure this must be a good man, and he wanted to save him. He was afraid to put him to death, for fear something might happen to him to punish him, so he went out again to try to persuade the Jews to let him go free.

The first thing he said was:

"I find in him no fault at all."

Was that the same as saying Jesus should go free? No, for the Romans often put innocent people to death, and let the very wicked ones go free. Every feast day they released a prisoner to please the people, no matter how bad he had been; but now, when Pilate offered to set Jesus free, they would not have him; they chose Barabbas instead, a cruel robber who had killed people. How could the chief priests, who had been taught from God's word, wish to have this tender Friend, whose whole life had been spent in doing good, put to a cruel death? Because evil once let into our hearts grows all the time stronger and bolder; bitter thoughts grow to hatred, and hatred to murder. The chief priests were envious because the people listened to Jesus rather than



PILATE'S WEAKNESS,

"Then cried they all saying, Not this man, but Barabbas!"

to them ; then they hated him for telling them they were not good and true and honest ; then they determined to have him put to death, and the evil purpose grew every moment stronger and stronger, until they were like wild beasts raging for blood. So, though no one could find any fault in Jesus, they cried out against him, and would not let Pilate set him free. All the people joined with them, and shouted angrily :

“ Not this man, but Barabbas.”

They were ready enough to do their part, and they meant to make Pilate do his.



CHAPTER LXV.

JESUS DELIVERED TO BE CRUCIFIED.

PILATE was a heathen, and had been taught that the gods whom he worshiped often put on the forms of poor men, and went among people. Those who were kind to them they would afterward reward with great honor, and those who despised them they would punish. So Pilate was afraid to put Jesus to death, and when his wife sent word to him that she had dreamed dreadful dreams about him, and begged him not to have anything to do with that good man, he determined in some way to release him or throw the blame upon some one else. Does it take the blame from us to let other people do wrong when we might prevent it?

Pilate tried several ways to get rid of the blame of wrongdoing.

1. First he tried to get the chief priests to punish Jesus themselves. Why would they not do it? Would this have cleared Pilate?

2. Then he offered to release him, even if he deserved to die. If they had chosen Jesus instead of Barabbas would this have cleared Pilate?

3. Then he tried to get Herod, the governor of Galilee, to judge Jesus, but Herod sent him back. If Herod had put him to death would Pilate have been any less to blame?

4. Then he had his cruel soldiers beat Jesus. They put a crown of thorns upon his head and clothed him

"And they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"

MOCKING THE SAVIOUR-KING.



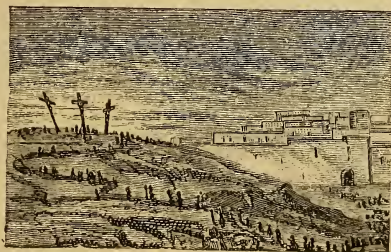
in a purple robe, such as kings wear. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews," as if they were going to worship him, and then struck him with their hands. Pilate hoped the Jews would be satisfied with this punishment, and that when they saw this poor, weary, bleeding sufferer they would be ashamed of their hatred. But when he brought Jesus out to them and said again, "I find no fault in him," they only cried out more fiercely than ever, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

*5. Pilate talked once more with Jesus, and once more he tried to persuade the Jews to release him; but when they said, "If you let this man go you are not a friend to Cæsar, the emperor of Rome, who sent you here," he dared not say anything more. He knew that these Jews, who hated this innocent man, could easily persuade Cæsar to put him also to death, so he gave up trying to save Jesus. He brought him out before them and said to them, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; if you put him to death you shall bear the blame," and he washed his hands before them, as if he were washing off the blood from himself. The people answered, "We will bear the blame. His blood be on us, and on our children." So Pilate gave Jesus up into their hands, and they took him and led him away. The dreadful sin was indeed upon them, but could Pilate get rid of his part in any way? He could have prevented the wrong, and so it was his wrong.

We talk and read and think about the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may not forget the wonderful love and pity which brought him to earth and made him patiently bear such pain and wrong and sorrow for us. When our hearts are full of anger toward the cruel hands that smote him we must remember that

if sin had not been in the world the Saviour need not have come to suffer and die, and if we are truly grieved over his sufferings we shall let him draw us away from sin. It is as if by your disobedience you had fallen into the power of savages and your father had been burned and cut and wounded in trying to save you. Would it not be pitiful if, after all this, you would not go home with him? And whenever you saw his wounded hands or thought of what he had suffered, would you not say: "It was to save me that my dear father bore such things; all I can do to show my sorrow is to be loving and obedient now; to be always careful to please him and help him to take care of the others?"

The Lord let his servant, Isaiah, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus Christ was born, write down beforehand all about the Saviour who was coming. Isaiah saw these very things, and he told how Jesus would be beaten and mocked and crucified; and yet he said that by and by, when he saw us saved from our sins by this pain and sorrow, he would be satisfied. You are one for whom he died; when he looks at you to-day is he satisfied because you have opened your heart to his Spirit and let him dwell in you and teach you?



CHAPTER LXVI.

JESUS CRUCIFIED.

ONLY about a week has passed since Jesus rode through the streets of Jerusalem surrounded by children singing "Hosanna," and by multitudes of people who shouted, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Now he is taking a sorrowful journey through the same streets, faint and weary and bleeding. The soldiers who had charge of him laid upon his bruised shoulders the heavy cross upon which he was to be crucified, but he was too weak to bear it, so they made a man whom they met coming out of the country take it and carry it, while a crowd followed after, to the place outside the gates where Jesus was to be crucified.

They were not all cruel people. Some of them were women, who wept aloud as they went, but Jesus turned and spoke to them. He told them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children, because of the trouble that would soon come upon their people.

They went on until they came to the place, and then they crucified him, and two thieves also, one on his right hand and one on his left. Over the cross to which he was nailed they put a writing which Pilate had prepared, to let every one know who this was who was to be crucified. It said, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," and it was in three languages, so that all could read. The chief priests did not wish to have it said that their king was crucified, so they asked Pilate to change



THE CRUCIFIXION.

"And the women which followed him from Galilee stood afar off, beholding these things."

the writing, and make it, "He *said*, I am King of the Jews;" but Pilate would not. He was angry with the Jews because they had urged him on to do what he knew was wrong, and he only said, "What I have written I have written," and sent them away.

The Roman soldiers were accustomed to see and to do cruel things, and they had no pity for suffering. They divided the garments of our Lord into four parts, one for each soldier, and then they cast lots to see who should have the beautiful woven coat which was to wear next the body. Instead of pitying Jesus they mocked at him, and so did the chief priests and the rulers who came to look on. They said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he be Christ, the chosen of God." The people that passed by shook their heads and mocked him also, and said, "Let Christ the King of Israel come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." One of the thieves who was crucified mocked also, and said, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us;" but the other thief rebuked him. He said, "Are you not afraid to talk so when you are just going to die? We, indeed, deserve to die, but this man has done nothing wrong;" and then he prayed to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Even in that dreadful hour Jesus heard his prayer, forgave his sins, and promised, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But there were not all hard hearts around the cross. Some of the friends of Jesus were watching afar off, hoping that, after all, their dear Master would strike down his enemies and save himself. And near the cross were a few whom no danger could drive away. There was the mother of Jesus and three other women, and with them was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved

best. When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" And to John he said, "Behold thy mother!" So from that hour John took the mother of Jesus to his own home to love and care for.

And now even the careless soldiers could see that something strange was taking place. The sun began to grow dim, and for three hours all was black darkness. The earth shook and trembled, the beautiful veil that hung in the temple before the most holy place was torn in two, the rocks were rent and the graves were opened. The sufferings of our Lord Jesus were almost ended. He said, "I thirst," and they dipped a sponge in vinegar and raised it to his lips. Then he spoke his last words, "It is finished," and bowed his head and died. All the suffering of his life on earth, all its pain and sorrow and weariness, were finished; all the work that he came to do in a human body was finished. But his work for our salvation goes on always, because, as the Bible says, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Could anyone believe that this was only a man at whose death the sun was darkened, the earth shook, and the graves were opened? Even the Roman centurion said, "Certainly this was a righteous man," and the people who were looking on smote upon their breasts as they remembered how they had cried out, "Crucify him," and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

For a little while our Lord is to be the prisoner of death, but we shall soon see him again as the King and Conqueror.

CHAPTER LXVII.

JESUS RISEN.

AMONG the friends of Jesus who loved him most tenderly were many women, and some of their names are mentioned in the Bible. First, of course, was Mary, his mother, and there were two other Marys, the mother of James and a Mary who was called Magdalene, because she lived in the little town of Magdala. Then there was Joanna, and Susanna, and many others who used to minister to Jesus when he went about from city to city supplying his needs and caring for him. They stood weeping and watching when Jesus was crucified; some of them saw him wrapped in fine linen and laid in the tomb in Joseph's garden, a tomb cut out of the rock and closed with a great stone in place of a door. Then they went away home, for the Jewish Sabbath was just beginning, and they could not do anything until the Sabbath was over. They never dreamed of seeing their dear Lord alive again; they thought all was over, and the only thing they could do was to honor him by embalming his precious body with sweet spices, that it might not so quickly decay and turn again to dust.

The women could not wait for sunrise, but as soon as it began to grow light, toward the dawning of the day, they took their spices and ointments and started on their way. There were three of them, Mary the mother of James, Mary Magdalene, and Salome, the woman who had once asked Jesus to let her two sons sit, one



THE ENTOMBMENT. (AFTER TITIAN.)
"Then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes."

on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom. As they went they talked among themselves about that great stone that closed up the chamber in the rock. There was room enough for several people to go into the chamber, but they did not see how they could get that stone out of the way. They said, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" But still they went on, and when they came near they saw that the stone *was* rolled away. They were not at all afraid, only glad, and they hastened on and went into the sepulcher, probably thinking that James or John or Peter had come there before them. When they entered, instead of the dead body wrapped in linen, they saw only a young man sitting on one side clothed in a long white garment, and they were afraid.

The angel bade them not be afraid, for Jesus, whom they were seeking, was risen. He bade them look at the place where he had lain and see that it was empty, and then go and tell the disciples, and especially Peter, that Jesus would meet them in Galilee, as he had promised. The women were so frightened and astonished that they fled away trembling, without stopping to tell anybody what they had seen. They ran to the house where the disciples were, and Mary Magdalene said to Peter and John, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him."

Peter did not wait to hear any more; he and John ran to the sepulcher; but John was the swifter runner, and got there first. While he was looking in Peter came up; he went directly in, and then John followed him. They saw it was as Mary had said, the Lord was gone. There, lying by themselves, were the linen clothes in which he had been wrapped; and they went away wondering.

But Mary could not go away. She stood weeping by the door of the sepulcher, and by and by she stooped and looked in to see if it could really be true that Jesus was gone. This time, instead of the one angel she saw two, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Mary answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Then she turned about and saw some one standing near her whom she supposed was the gardener, and he also asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Mary thought the gardener would surely know where they had taken the body of Jesus, and she began to beg him to tell her. Suddenly Jesus called her by her own name, and when he said "Mary!" her eyes were opened, and she knew that this was indeed her dear Lord alive from the dead. Now Jesus himself sent her to go and tell his disciples that he had risen, and Mary came to them as they mourned and wept with her wonderful story, not that the angels had told her Jesus was risen, but that she herself had seen him, heard his voice, and talked with him.

Do you think they left off weeping and hastened to Galilee to meet him? No, they did not believe Mary; they thought she had only seen a vision, and when afterward two other disciples came and told them how Jesus had appeared to them as they went into the country and walked with them, still they did not believe. Only those who really saw Jesus could believe that he was alive, but by and by they all had a chance to see him and to understand that, as Christ had risen from the dead, so all who loved him should also rise.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

VISITS FROM JESUS.

AFTER his resurrection the Lord Jesus did not live with his disciples as he used to do. He showed himself to them a good many times, so that they might be sure he had really risen from the dead ; but sometimes when he was with them they could not see him, sometimes when they thought they were all alone he suddenly appeared among them, and sometimes he vanished from their sight.

The very day on which he appeared to Mary two of the disciples were taking a long walk together to the little village of Emmaus, and all at once Jesus joined them. They did not know who it was, and he talked with them about the crucifixion and explained to them why Christ had died. They were so interested in what he said that they begged him to stay with them, and when they were going to eat, and Jesus was just giving thanks for the food, suddenly their eyes were opened and they knew him, but he vanished instantly from their sight.

The two disciples were so filled with wonder and gladness that they could not wait till morning, but hastened back that night to tell the news to the rest. They found the whole company gathered together in a room, with the doors shut, for fear of the Jews, and they began to tell the story. While they were yet talking Jesus himself stood in the midst and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." At first they were frightened ; they could

not believe that this really was their dear Master in the very same body which they had seen nailed to the cross and laid dead and helpless in the tomb. But Jesus said, "Why are you troubled?" He bade them look at him and see that it really was himself, and showed them his hands and his feet, and told them to handle him, and see that he had flesh and bones, as he used to have, and he even asked them for some food, and ate before them. And when they were full of joy, yet felt that this was almost too good to be true, Jesus reminded them how often he had told them about his death and resurrection; and he opened their hearts to receive the Holy Spirit, so that they might understand what he had taught them and what was written about him in the Scriptures. He said again, "Peace be unto you," "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Now, one of the disciples, called Thomas, was not with the rest when Jesus came. We do not know why he was away, but there may have been some good reason for it. We know he loved Jesus and was willing to risk his life for him, but when the others told him about that wonderful evening when Jesus stood among them and talked with them Thomas thought there must be some mistake about it, and he said he never could believe unless he saw with his own eyes what they had seen and even touched with his finger the print of the nails and put his hand into the wound in his side. Perhaps the others talked to Thomas and said, "It certainly was the Lord; we saw him, and heard his voice, and knew that it was he." But Thomas would say, "You did not believe until you had seen for yourselves. When Mary and the others said they had seen him you thought it was only a vision. I must see him too, or I will not believe,

and I will not trust my eyes ; I must touch him with my hands, that I may be sure it is the very same Jesus."

It was eight days before Thomas saw Jesus, but then, when they were again in the room, with the doors shut, there stood Jesus in their midst, saying, just as he had said before, "Peace be unto you." How eagerly Thomas must have gazed at him, thinking, "Yes, that really does seem to be the Master ; I am almost surè." And very likely Peter whispered, "Now, then, Thomas, what did we tell you?" Then Jesus turned toward Thomas and said, in his own loving voice, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing." Jesus knew the very words which Thomas had said, just as he now knows not only the words we speak but the very thoughts of our hearts ; and he repeated them, so that they all might know that he was just as truly present when they could not see and touch him as when their eyes looked into his face and their ears caught the sound of his voice. Thomas did not wish now to put his finger in the print of the nails ; he felt now as if he could believe without even seeing. He cried out, "My Lord and my God," and was ready to worship him. Jesus did not blame Thomas any more than the others for being so slow to believe. No doubt there were many among the women to whom Mary Magdalene told her story, and at Bethany, in the home of Lazarus, who did not wait to see, but believed the good tidings at once. Jesus knew who they were, and he remembered all the multitudes that by and by would believe who never had seen his face. He only said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

CHAPTER LXIX.

SIMON PETER.

Do you remember which of the disciples it was who followed Jesus to the judgment hall, and then was so afraid that he said three times, "I never knew him?" That was Peter, the very one who had said, "Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I. I will lay down my life for thy sake."

Peter had a great deal of love, but not enough courage, and he did not always stop to think. After he said, "I never knew him," Jesus turned and looked at him, and Peter's heart was almost broken. He went out and wept bitterly to think what he had done.

But Peter really loved Jesus, and he did not say, "I am so bad he never will forgive me." He stayed with the other disciples, and especially with John; he was the very first man to go into the empty tomb after Jesus had risen; he was with the rest when Jesus came into the room and said, "Peace be unto you;" but he must have felt as if he never could be happy till Jesus had said some word to show that he still loved him and had forgiven him.

Should you think Peter would have fallen at his feet, the time he saw him, and said, "O, my dear Master, forgive me for denying you, and do believe that I love you?" That would have been like Peter's way, but I think he was growing wiser. He remembered how many foolish things he had said, and how he had boasted of

loving Jesus better than any of the others, and so he thought, "I will not speak any more hasty words or make any more promises. The Master can see my heart; he knows I really do love him, and I will wait for him to speak." So Peter waited.

But the disciples were all poor men, and it was necessary for them to work for a living, and one day Peter said, "I am going fishing;" and some of the others said, "We will go too." They went out on the Sea of Galilee, and dropped their net from the ship and then drew it in, and so they went on toiling all night, without catching anything. Early in the morning, when they must have been hungry and tired, they looked toward the shore, and saw a man standing there, as if he were waiting for them. This man called to them, "Children, have you anything to eat," and they said, "No." Then he said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you shall find." They cast the net where he bade them, and caught so many great fishes that they could not draw it in; and John said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

Peter did not wait for the rest; he fastened his coat about him, and jumped overboard to get to his Lord more quickly, while the others came in the boat, dragging the heavy net toward the shore.

As they came on shore they saw another wonderful thing. There was breakfast all ready for them; a fire of coals burning, fish laid upon the coals, and bread, and Jesus bade them come and eat. He himself waited upon them, and gave them the bread and the fish with his own hands, while they looked at him in wonder. They knew it was their Lord, but they did not dare to talk with him and ask him questions as they used to do. They waited for him to speak to them, and after

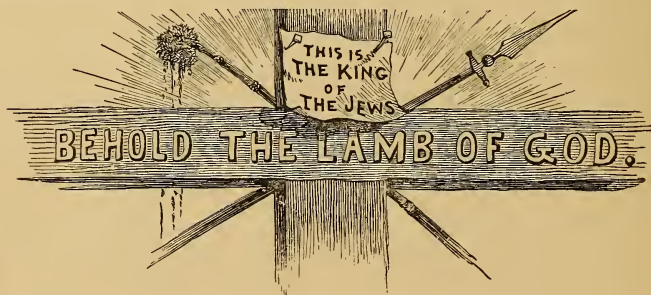
they had eaten Jesus did speak. This time he spoke to Peter, who had been in such haste that he had jumped into the sea to get to him. He did not say a word about Peter's cowardly denial in the judgment hall. He asked a question : " Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ? " that is, " Do you love me as you once said you did, more than the other disciples do ? "

You can see that Simon Peter had learned to be more careful about boasting, for he did not say, " Yes, truly I do." He had learned that he was not very wise about himself; but Jesus knew all about him, and could see just what was in his heart, and *one* thing Peter was sure of : there might be a great deal of weakness and sinfulness in his heart, but there certainly was love for Jesus in it ; so, without boasting at all, he only answered, " Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus did know it, and he told Peter how he was to prove his love : not by following Jesus, as he had once said he would, to prison and to death, for Jesus was presently going away into heaven ; not by words, but by deeds, by working for Jesus and doing such work as he himself, the good Shepherd, came to do. Jesus said to him, " Feed my lambs," and then afterward he asked the same question twice, and bade him, " Feed my sheep." Peter was sad because Jesus asked him the third time, " Lovest thou me ? " but he never forgot that he was to show his love by caring for and teaching and guiding the young and the old in Christ's flock.

Are you not glad that Jesus thought first of the little ones of his flock, and commanded that they should be fed out of his words, so that their souls might grow as well as their bodies ? And are you not glad that we may all show our love to Jesus by giving the bread of

life to others? You know he said he would bless those who gave even a cup of cold water in his name, and he counts and remembers the smallest things we do for love's sake. Sometimes when children are asked, "Do you love the Lord Jesus?" they say, "Yes," and think no more about it; but what if Jesus sat here among us, as he did that day among his disciples, and looked into your eyes and said, "Mary, do you love me?" Then if you could honestly say, as Peter did, "You know I love you," he would bid you show your love by being loving to others, by showing a beautiful example of a gentle, obedient life, by sharing what you have with others, and trying to help them to be good. Every morning, when you waken, you may think Jesus whispers to you, "Do you love me? Then try to show it to-day by helping some one. Let everyone see how my little ones live when their hearts are full of my love."

I ought to tell you that Simon Peter obeyed this command, that he gave his whole life to caring for and teaching the flock of God, that he did go cheerfully to prison, and finally death, for the sake of his Master, and counted it an honor that he could give his life for Jesus.



CHAPTER LXX.

LAST DAYS OF JESUS.

WHEN a dear friend has gone away from us to heaven we love to think over the last days he was with us and remember what he did and what he said. So, after the Lord Jesus went away to heaven, his disciples must have talked over all he had said to them, and some would remember one thing and some another. It is not likely they were all with him every minute, and Andrew might say, "Do you remember that morning when our Lord was sitting opposite the treasury and saw the rich men putting their money in the box and letting every one know how much they put in?" And John might say, "Tell me all about it. I was not there. He had sent me to Bethany with a message to Mary and Martha."

And then Philip might tell how a poor widow came with the rest, slipping quietly through the crowd, not expecting anyone to notice her, and dropped in two little mites that together made only a farthing, and then hastened away happy because she had done all she could; and somehow a blessing seemed to come upon her. And the dear Lord had bidden his disciples look at her, and told them that she had done more than all the rich, because they would never miss what they had given, but this poor woman, in her love and her poverty, had given all she had.

Then John and Matthew and Peter might each tell something that he remembered; so from all their stories

in the four gospels we may find out many things which Jesus said in this last week of his life on earth.

One day, when Jesus was talking with them and with some people who had come to see him, he told them that the time had come when he was to be glorified. The disciples thought to be glorified meant to be made king and ruler over the people instead of going about as a poor, homeless man. But Jesus meant that he was going to be crucified, to be nailed upon the cross and put to death. Was not that a strange way to be made a king, to be laid in the grave and have all his work ended and lost? But Jesus explained to them that he came into the world on purpose for this, that all his preaching and teaching and healing were only to prepare the way that he might die for all the world.

Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Only a few had heard him preach, but the story of his life and death has been told everywhere, and wherever men listen their hearts are drawn to this King who loved them and gave his life for them.

Jesus had everlasting life; death could not hold him; but it was not his wish to dwell in heaven without us. He loved us, and he wanted that we also should live where he was. And so he went down into the grave, and the Bible says he tasted death for every one of us, and then, by his glorious resurrection, he conquered death, and promised to make every one of us conquerors also, if we believe in him.

Jesus told his disciples another strange thing, and that was that even when it seemed as if Satan had triumphed he was cast out of his kingdom. He had been called the prince of this world because he had so many

people to serve him, but Jesus was a stronger King, and he was going to rule the world and draw all men to his service. Will we let him draw us to his service, give us everlasting life, conquer Satan for us? Then we must see what were some of the last words he left for us, and how he told us to serve him.

In this very talk he said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me;" so the one rule must be to live as Jesus lived, and try to be like him. That means, first of all, to live for others, to love them so much that we want to help them to be good and lead them to God. Only Jesus can put this unselfish love in our hearts and give us wisdom to know how to live right ourselves and help others. He calls himself the Light of the world, and bids us look at him as he goes before us, and then we shall not stumble. He calls those who look to him for wisdom and listen for his words by a beautiful name. He calls them "the children of light" because Jesus, the Light of the world, dwells and shines in their hearts, and makes them like himself. What shall we remember of these last words of Jesus? We will remember this above all: that for us he has conquered death and Satan; that in his name we also may conquer; that he calls us to follow him and serve him, and promises that we may be children of the light even here, and that by and by where he is we shall be also, loved and owned and honored by our Father in heaven.



CHAPTER LXXI.

THE ASCENDING LORD.

I THINK the very happiest people in all the land of Palestine must have been a little company of friends who were taking a walk along the road toward Bethany on a bright day in the month of May. The grass was green, the trees were full of flowers, and the birds were singing. This little company of friends had taken a great many walks together, but never one like this. In the midst was the beloved Master, and the others walked close beside him, looking into his eyes, listening to his words, watching for a smile, and sometimes taking hold of his hands or his garments, and saying with happy tears,

“Yes, it is indeed He; he has come back to us again, the dear, blessed Master, and now all the trouble is over.”

For this precious Master had been away from them. They thought they had lost him. They had seen him mocked and scourged and crucified, but had never quite given up all hope until he was actually dead and laid away in the grave. They had gone away with aching hearts and thought it was all over.

And then such a wonderful thing had happened. This same Jesus had come back to them again alive—though they surely had seen him dead—and walked, and talked, and eaten with them. It seemed too blessed to be true, and at first they could not believe it, but by and by they came to know that it was really true, and they almost feared to take their eyes away from him lest they

should lose him again. But day by day they grew more sure, and began to wonder what their dear Master was going to do with those wicked men who had put him to death, and for his own chosen people, who did not believe on him. They asked him some questions about it as they walked along, but Jesus did not tell them what they wanted to know. He told them that the Father had his own plans, and it was not necessary that they should know about them, but that he had work for them to do all over the earth, and they must go and do it. They were to preach and to teach and to tell the story everywhere, to everybody; to the proud, haughty scribes and Pharisees, and the poor, hungry beggars in the street. The good news was for all people, just as the angels had sung when this Saviour was born to save his people from their sins.

But they were not wise enough to go yet. They did not understand very much, although the Master had been teaching them for three years; but he told them to wait until God should send into their hearts a spirit of wisdom, to make everything clear and plain to them. This spirit of wisdom was called the Holy Ghost. It was God's own Spirit, and would take away all fear and give them power and strength to do their work. Once before when Jesus had told them about this Spirit he called it the Comforter, who would come to comfort them after he went away, and now when he spoke of it again I think John, who loved him best and was most like him, must have looked at him with a little ache in his heart, and thought,

"Can he be going away again? O, nothing is so good as having him with us. Nothing can comfort us if we lose him again."

While they all looked at him a wondrous change came over the Master, and they saw him slowly taken up from their very midst, up, up toward heaven, till he was lost to sight in a cloud. And as they gazed after him a comforting voice spoke to them, and there beside them were two men in shining garments who told them that some day this same Jesus would come again to them from heaven, just as they had seen him go away. They were not very wise yet, and perhaps they thought it would only be a few days until the Master came back ; but at any rate they remembered that he had told them to wait in Jerusalem until God gave them the spirit of power and wisdom, and so they went back to the city and went with the other disciples into an upper room and prayed and waited to see what the Father would tell them.

It seemed like a very sorrowful ending to the beautiful walk, and as they went back some of them may have been weeping, just as you would weep if you had received a dear dead friend back from the grave, and then lost him again, just when you were beginning to believe that it was really true.

It was so hard to believe that this was best, and to understand that this tender, sympathizing Master, who had walked with them on earth, would be their strong, glorious, compassionate Friend in heaven. But they talked it all over together in that upper room, and I suppose each one tried to recall something that Jesus had said or done ; and one would say,

“Don’t you remember he said it was best for us that he should go away?”

And another would say,

“Don’t you remember how the Master said, ‘Ye

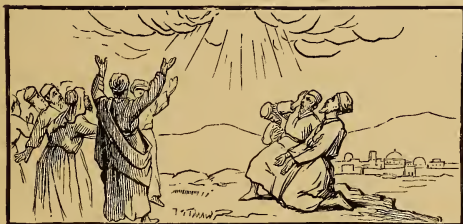
shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy?'"

"Yes, and, 'If I go away I will send the Comforter unto you.'"

"The Comforter! That is the Holy Ghost for which we were to wait. The Master said when he was come he should teach us all things and bring all things to our remembrance."

"Perhaps the Father will send him this very night," said another.

So, talking and praying, they waited for the coming of this wonderful messenger.



CHAPTER LXXII.

THE BELIEVING PEOPLE.

I SUPPOSE when the Holy Ghost came upon the disciples they were too happy to stay in that upper chamber. They wanted to tell the story, and when the people came running together there was no room for them, so perhaps they went out to the open court of the house. Every moment more and more people came in, merchants that had come up with goods to sell, workmen who were going along the streets, travelers who were visiting Jerusalem, and even priests from the temple. The news spread all through the city that here was a man called Peter, just a plain fisherman from Galilee, who was not learned at all, talking in a wonderful way about the things that had happened in Jerusalem and about the law. There he stood with the other disciples, and as he talked everyone listened. At first there may have been some talking and laughing among the crowd, but presently all was still, and as Peter went on to show them from the Scripture that Jesus whom they had crucified was indeed the Son of God they were filled with fear, and said, "What shall we do?"

Peter knew very well what to tell them. It was only a little while since he had denied that he even knew his dear Master, but he had repented and been forgiven, and he knew there was just one way for sinners to find peace, and that was to repent and go to Jesus for forgiveness. That was what he told them to do, to repent and be

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "Every one of you." Just the same way for the proud priests and doctors and the poor beggars, the old white-headed men and the little children. Some of the people did not like that. They thought they were good enough already. Some of them thought they were too wise to be taught by a poor fisherman, and some of them, I dare say, just laughed and went away.

But a great many listened and obeyed, and about three thousand were converted that very day and joined the company of the disciples. Some of them were poor, and some were rich, but their hearts were so full of this new spirit of love that they were all like one family, and shared what they had together. The rich men that had more than they needed divided with the others, and so everyone had enough. And every day they went up to the temple to praise God, and then went about from house to house talking about these wonderful things.

Such a company of happy people was never seen in Jerusalem before, and it is not strange that all who saw them loved them, and said these were indeed blessed people. And as they went about telling the story others who heard believed also; and so day by day the company grew larger, just as God's Church would always grow if we all loved each other like brothers and sisters, if we were all ready to share the pleasant things which we have with those who have less than we; if every day and everywhere we told the story of good news through the Lord Jesus, and, best of all, were so glad and happy and full of thanksgiving that everyone would say, "What happy people! it must be good to be like them."

Before Jesus went up again to heaven he told his disciples that they should be his witnesses everywhere.

That was why they were to receive this Spirit of power ; so that they might be wise enough and brave enough to witness for their Master. And he says to every one of us, "You are my witnesses." When the Lord Jesus was on trial they brought false witnesses to tell things that were not true about him. It is a dreadful thing to be a lying witness, but if God's children are selfish and angry and impertinent and unkind, I am afraid that is very much like bearing false witness. For when the people who are asking, "What kind of a Master do you serve?" see all these unlovely things in you, they say, "Well, I do not care about serving God if he has such servants as that."

So it is best always to remember that wherever we are and whatever we do we may be witnessing for God. We can work like Christians, do everything thoroughly and cheerfully and promptly ; we can study like Christians, improving the time and doing our best always ; we can play like Christians, by being fair and honest and unselfish and good-natured ; in fact, there is not a thing we do from morning till night which will not be better done by always remembering, "I am one of God's witnesses." I am so glad that they did not forget to put it into the story of those early disciples that they were such a happy people and went about praising God and eating their meat with gladness of heart. Gladness of heart means a blessed kind of gladness very deep down, and very warm and bright, so that even trouble could not darken it. Gladness of heart is like the peace that Jesus said he would give his children, a peace that nobody could take away.

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